

HENRY MERRITT

ART-CRITICISM

AND ROMANCE

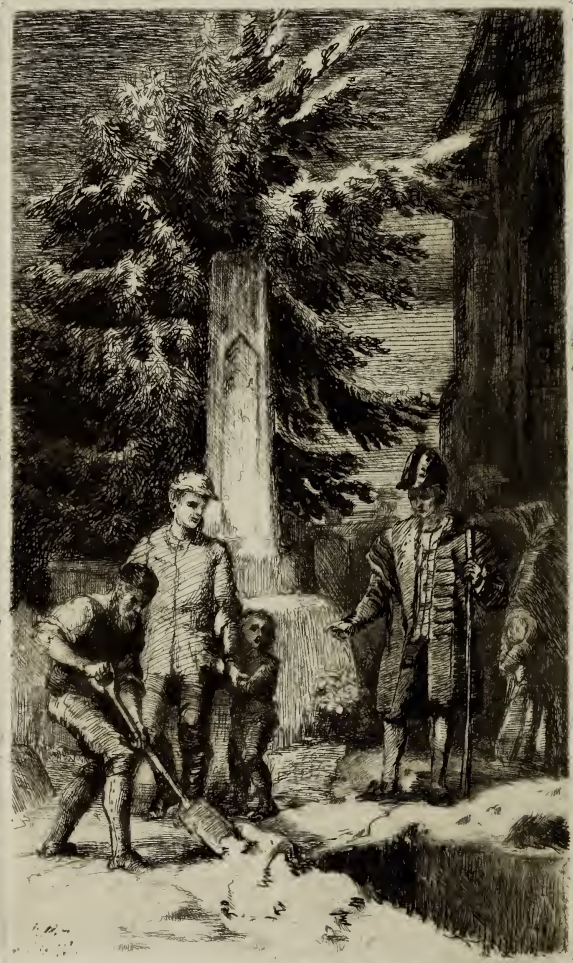
Ulrich Middeldorf



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

HENRY MERRITT

VOL. II.

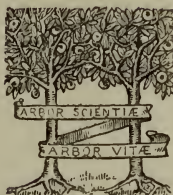


HENRY MERRITT

ART CRITICISM AND ROMANCE

WITH RECOLLECTIONS, AND 23 ETCHINGS

BY ANNA LEA MERRITT



IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

LONDON

C. KEGAN PAUL & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1879

(The rights of translation and of reproduction are reserved)

CONTENTS

OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.



ROBERT DALBY :

CHAPTER	PAGE
<i>I. The Orphan</i>	3
<i>II. Primitive Infant School</i>	5
<i>III. The School Broken Up</i>	6
<i>IV. The Long Frost</i>	8
<i>V. The Funeral</i>	13
<i>VI. The Dog-Fancier</i>	14
<i>VII. The Rope Walk</i>	20
<i>VIII. An Order for the Hangman</i>	21
<i>IX. Margaret Trent</i>	25
<i>X. Margaret's Fate</i>	30
<i>XI. A Change of Occupation</i>	32
<i>XII. Hospital Scenes</i>	35
<i>XIII. The Bundle</i>	42
<i>XIV. The Retreat from the Woods</i>	45
<i>XV. Homeless</i>	48
<i>XVI. Looking for a Crust</i>	51
<i>XVII. The Prisoner Released</i>	53
<i>XVIII. Converted into a Market Boy</i>	56
<i>XIX. Enemies Turn Up</i>	60
<i>XX. The Hunchbacks Punished</i>	62

ROBERT DALBY—*continued.*

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXI. <i>Experience at School</i>	64
XXII. <i>The Picture Magazine</i>	67
XXIII. <i>The Errand Boy's Flight to School</i>	72
XXIV. <i>The Charity Boy Paints a Picture</i>	77
XXV. <i>The Debt Collector</i>	81
XXVI. <i>The Caricature</i>	84
XXVII. <i>Paper and Pencils</i>	90
XXVIII. <i>The School Council</i>	94
XXIX. <i>The Old Carver</i>	99
XXX. <i>The Carver's Home</i>	101
XXXI. <i>The Old Carver's Story</i>	107
XXXII. <i>The Signorina's Picture</i>	114
XXXIII. <i>The Gipsy Party</i>	118
XXXIV. <i>The Old Carver's Last Work</i>	121
XXXV. <i>The Gardener and His Prints</i>	126
XXXVI. <i>The Money-Lender's Scheme</i>	129
XXXVII. <i>The Prediction of the Gardener's Wife Proves True</i>	133
XXXVIII. <i>His Lordship's Porter</i>	136
XXXIX. <i>Madame Mitchell's</i>	142
XL. <i>The Picture Restorer</i>	150
XLI. <i>The Two Ruysdaels</i>	157
XLII. <i>Laura Bezza</i>	165
XLIII. <i>The Catastrophe and the Flight</i>	168
XLIV. <i>Signor Altoviti</i>	172
XLV. <i>Forlorn Hopes</i>	177
XLVI. <i>The Print Collector</i>	179
XLVII. <i>Cheated by a Picture-Dealer</i>	182
XLVIII. <i>Become a Light Porter</i>	188
XLIX. <i>The Print Seller's Story</i>	192
L. <i>The Poet</i>	201

Contents of the Second Volume.

vii

ROBERT DALBY—continued.

CHAPTER	PAGE
<i>LI. The Lodging-House</i>	206
<i>LII. The Cobbler's Plot</i>	209
<i>LIII. The Italian's Fireside</i>	212
<i>LIV. Explanations and Projects</i>	214
<i>LV. A Fortunate Commission</i>	217
<i>LVI. A Journey to Holland</i>	220
<i>LVII. The Jew Discovers New Features of Character</i>	225
<i>LVIII. The Jew's Plot</i>	229
<i>LIX. At Home at the Hague</i>	235

THE OXFORD PROFESSOR AND THE HARPIST	239
--	-----

PART I.

<i>I. Introduced to the Professor of Astronomy</i>	242
<i>II. The Professor and the Rooks</i>	245
<i>III. Scouts</i>	250
<i>IV. The Professor and his Tailor</i>	252
<i>V. The Professor's Oration</i>	255
<i>VI. Breakfast at the Tower</i>	258
<i>VII. The Colleges Deserted</i>	261
<i>VIII. Pastoral Scenes</i>	263
<i>IX. The Professor gives a Fish Dinner</i>	266
<i>X. The Gown and the Town</i>	269
<i>XI. Arrival of Carlotta and the Countess</i>	272
<i>XII. The Harpist at the Manor House</i>	277
<i>XIII. Serjeant Belsides at the Common Room</i>	281
<i>XIV. A Frost Scene with Figures</i>	286
<i>XV. The Cowherd and His Famous Herd</i>	290
<i>XVI. Serjeant Belsides and the Harpist</i>	294
<i>XVII. An Old Lover Appears</i>	298
<i>XVIII. Intensity of Lord Petrel's Love</i>	302
<i>XIX. Strange Midnight Adventure</i>	304

THE OXFORD PROFESSOR AND THE HARPIST—*continued.*

PART II.

CHAPTER	PAGE
XX. <i>Professor Campo in London</i>	307
XXI. <i>Town Life Quite New to the Professor</i> . . .	310
XXII. <i>Poor Pietro Lost and Found</i>	316
XXIII. <i>Pietro Enlightens the Professor</i>	320
XXIV. <i>The Harpist's Triumphs</i>	321
XXV. <i>The Professor and the Poor Acrobats</i> . . .	325
XXVI. <i>Reappearance of Lord Petrel</i>	333
XXVII. <i>The Spy at Work Again</i>	336
XXVIII. <i>The Consultation</i>	339
XXIX. <i>The Oblong Chest.—The Departure</i> . . .	344
XXX. <i>Old Pastoral Scenes Revisited</i>	347
XXXI. <i>The Return to Oxford.—Pietro's Story</i> . . .	351
XXXII. <i>Peace at the Tower, and Festivities at the Manor House</i>	359

ILLUSTRATIONS.

AFTER THE FUNERAL	<i>Frontispiece</i>
ON A WINDY MARCH MORNING	<i>To face page 22</i>
BLOWING THE ORGAN BELLOWS	„ 74
APPEALING TO THE OLD CARVER	„ 100
ALTOVITI SINGING HIS COUNTRY'S SONGS	„ 174
THE LAST SCENE IN THE JEW'S PLAY	„ 234
THE HARPIST	„ 239
AT THE MANOR HOUSE	„ 278
MY GRAVE MASTER	„ 314
THE YOUNG CASTILIANS	„ 328
OLD PASTORAL SCENES REVISITED	„ 350

ROBERT DALBY

CHAPTER I.

THE ORPHAN.

THE Universities of Oxford and Cambridge are equally remarkable for crooked streets, dark lanes, and out-of-the-way thoroughfares, in which poor people linger out their lives, secure alike from prying dons and insolent students. On this account, therefore, I shall have no fear for the incognito which it is my intention to preserve. Such localities as I may have occasion to describe in the following narrative will be found to exist in common in either University.

Friars' Lane, or Chequers Yard, as it was more commonly called, consisted of a row of old tenements forming one side of a narrow court, situated in the suburbs of one of the seats of learning in question, out of sight and forgotten by all save a few inveterate antiquaries—who forget nothing that is old and decayed save poor old men and women. Of all the members of the collegiate foundations around, only one poor sizar, an object of charity himself, was ever known to enter Friars' Lane, so that we had the place well-nigh to ourselves and lived quiet lives; for the most part in keeping with the gloomy aspect of the houses, which by reason of their great antiquity had become encrusted with moss: silvery grey and sombre green, woven, as poets would write, in dark sunless hours by the hidden fingers of Time. The worn,

broken pavement, telling of much traffic in days past, had also become clothed with the same mysterious texture of age. A high wall, which was meant to, and did effectually, shut in Friars' Lane, also excluded the sunlight from the inhabitants, save just one hour's burst at mid-day. At the end of the Lane were the town ditch and fortifications; and through a cavity in the wall, which would have been repaired had it been known to the authorities, we commanded a glimpse of the county jail, a massive tower and dense keep, old as the Normans; a place where men had groaned in fetters for many centuries, and over whose frowning battlements crimes unnumbered had been expiated on the gallows. Before six years had passed over my head I had beheld executions for sheep-stealing, arson, and murder, and become familiarised with these horrors. The lonesome ways of the poor inhabitants of this dismal neighbourhood failed, however, to create any very unpleasant impressions on my mind.

Looking back to my first recollections, I know that my home was in the fields. I call to mind a little room with a bed and curtains white as snow—the windows open, and on the sill and up the sides of the casement vine leaves and tendrils: it was in autumn time, for on a table spread with a napkin lay a heap of ripe grapes newly gathered. I remember little else. Fruit and sunlight in the foreground, with a background very dismal: another room, wherein was placed a coffin.

I first entered Friars' Lane, which I have described, by night. I was carried there by an old woman: an old man, with a lantern, led the way. The old people were my grandfather and grandmother. I was an orphan.

CHAPTER II.

PRIMITIVE INFANT SCHOOL.

IN neighbour Mistress Vane's Infant School I early became a pupil, where things went on pretty much in accordance with the reputation borne by these humble establishments. Mistress Vane was no great stickler for formalities : it was rarely that anything like order was preserved among us. The boys did pretty much as they pleased. Some of them exhibited no little ingenuity. One, a wiry shock-headed fellow, would beguile the morning with a lump of clay, shaping it into bricks upon the boards ; another would divide his dinner into a number of morsels, and spread out a miniature feast before a dozen imaginary guests, who, however, were not at all required to assist the owner in disposing of his meal. One owned a piece of string, of which he made many uses—among others, in imitation of the jail people, to hang a doll belonging to one of the girls. The champion of the boys, however, was distinguished by the possession of a knife, with which he cut his dinner and anything else that offered itself to his notice, so that in the end there was hardly a thing in the room that he had not cut. He even had the temerity to reduce the length of the governess's wand. Most of the children were too poor to have anything about them save the garments in which they stood upright ; yet though their pockets were empty, they took immense pride in having pockets, and spent part of their time in turning them inside out, in a triumphant way, to the envy of those who

had none. The boy with a piece of string was considered fortunate: the brick maker with his lump of clay not badly off; but, greater than a king, he of the knife kept his ground against all comers. The knife was the very wonder of the establishment, and it was seldom out of sight or out of mind. Being a good-tempered urchin, the possessor of this instrument seldom drew blood from others, but hacked and chopped his own fingers until they were like a saw, and Mistress Vane was generally engaged with her sticking plaster on his special account. There were, however, times when we were not permitted to trifle with the governess. There were prayers and hymns to be got through by rote, and cards of the alphabet and words of one syllable to learn. One of the injunctions with which Madame reluctantly troubled us was that we were on no account to disfigure the cards. Notwithstanding this, I am obliged to own they soon took a sickly hue and gradually dwindled away: from a square they became an oval, and eventually, nibbled and nibbled into no manner of shape, disappeared altogether.

CHAPTER III.

THE SCHOOL BROKEN UP.

UNFORTUNATELY for us all, Mistress Vane and her school were of brief duration. A few months, possibly a year, passed by, and the governess and her school and everything belonging to her vanished from human sight: disappeared as if through the trap-door of a theatre. The paraphernalia of her teaching room, the white wand,

the rush-bottomed chair, all sank and left not a wreck behind. Winter came and nipped her sorely. Her end was so lonely and strange that I well remember it. One night my grandfather missed the accustomed gleam of light from the bow-window, and straightway a thought came into his head.

‘Emily,’ said he to my grandmother, ‘I have not seen a light in the old governess’s window this evening.’

‘And who knows,’ said my grandmother, ‘but that the poor old lady is without the price of a candle.’

‘I should not wonder,’ mused my grandfather. ‘If anything happened to her, I should not like her to be alone—I should not be able to reconcile it to myself.’

‘Give me a candle,’ said he abruptly. ‘We can spare a candle anyhow, and if we couldn’t we would.’

Being furnished with the lantern, my grandfather stepped out, and when he was under the old elm near the governess’s door, he hesitated and listened: and, as he was attentively looking at the casement, a man came up and accosted him.

‘Can you tell me if anyone lives in yon bow-windowed room?’

‘I hope so,’ said my grandfather, struck by the question. ‘But why do you ask?’

‘Out of curiosity. Passing a few moments ago I heard a tapping on the glass. I looked up, but could perceive neither sign of light nor life, and even as you now came under the tree the tapping was again repeated in the same strange manner.’

Without making any reply, my grandfather, lantern in hand, ascended to the room of the governess, and there found matters worse than he had expected.

Stretched on her bed, still grasping in her hand the long wand, lay the poor old lady. Sensible to the last, and feeling her end draw nigh, she had thought by tapping on the window pane to arrest the attention of the passengers or haply of some neighbours. But alas! her efforts proved fruitless; she had sunk back upon her pillow, un comforted by mortal aid.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LONG FROST.

THE historic event known as the 'Long Frost' occurred when I was about six years old. The sexton of St. Margaret 'did a deal of business that winter' in the back churchyard, for the mortality was chiefly confined to the old and poor. There were a class of poor who would on no account 'go into the house,' that is the Poor-House, and what was more, would not receive 'Out-door relief.' The authorities scraped together a considerable sum of money, but in those days, as now, mechanics were loath to receive paupers' funds. They could work for hire, but would not receive the wages of charity. This difficulty the wealthy citizens tried to overcome. There was a large tract of idle land in the suburbs, on which, far as the eye could reach, not so much as a bush (not to say hut or shed) was to be seen, to afford shelter to man or beast. Pleasant in summer, its dainty carpet of daisies and clover fed innumerable horses and cows: in winter, it was half covered with ice, owing to the

prevailing autumn floods. It was an ingenious idea of the sheriff and bailiff who had charge of that icy region to take the opportunity of a well-stocked labour market, to dig a dyke and throw up an embankment to keep the swollen river within bounds. Those who could dig but would not beg were sent in gangs to work in that region of desolation. Poorly clad old men took pickaxes and spades, and set out each morning with empty stomachs to dig and delve. They tied ragged handkerchiefs round their mouths to keep their toothless jaws still, but their peaked noses took the purple hue of starvation; and their shrunken cheeks became blanched with want. The place seemed like a picture painted by some Polish artist, of the barren region of Siberia, only that, in place of Cossack overseers, the gangs were directed by worthy aldermen and sheriffs, well protected from the cold by stout overcoats and woollen comforters without and old ale within. Distinguished by his lofty stature and by his skill with the pickaxe, my grandfather stood among that band of amateur navigators, doing the work of a score for the pay of one. Not a word of complaint fell from his lips. There were others more wretched than he. His whole life had been passed in labour of the severest kind. From youth upwards he had been chiefly employed to build scaffoldings for masons, and often ran terrible risks. I have seen him climb the giddy height, when he seemed but a speck to me high up in the sky, stepping from pole to pole and from plank to plank. It was said that he was the best scaffold builder in those parts. But who thinks about scaffold builders! We see a belt of planks framed around the steeple, and ask no questions how it got there. We see a man carrying

poles and planks up ladders planted on ladders, two hundred feet from the ground ; he pauses, seats himself on the slippery pole, splices, binds and wedges the rickety structure into shape, and tier rises above tier until the gilt vane in the clouds is reached. A terrible calling that of the poorly-paid scaffold builder ! My grandfather built scaffolds for more than forty summers almost unharmed, and in the end met the fate of a dog.

He came home from the moors one Saturday at dusk with his 'bit of money'—and it was a bit. It was Christmas Eve, and grandmother had gone all the way to the wharf for some coals, for which she paid one shilling and threepence, being at the rate of five shillings a hundred-weight. She made a fire, and got some trifle on credit to put in the pot against the old man arrived. He supped by the light of the fire to save candles—no great hardship that. It might have been nine o'clock : I was in bed and asleep, when a terrible groan startled me awake.

'Get up, my boy, get up,' cried my grandmother. 'Your poor grandfather is very ill. Go to the grocer's, and get a rushlight. What a thing it is not to have a bit of candle ! Good God, what shall I do ?'

'Let the child lie in his bed,' said my grandfather. 'It will give him his death to send him out in such a night as this.'

'I shan't be gone five minutes,' said I, starting up, and slipping on my clothes.

'Ah ! I am afeard thee won't get served,' said my grandmother. 'Being Christmas Eve, the place will be crammed up to twelve o'clock.'

It was as my poor old guardian surmised, the shop

was full. Gathered about the counter stood a number of town people and college servants, chatting with the grocer and his assistants, who took no more notice of my order than if a cur had barked in the street. Oh, that I had then possessed a little of that shrewdness which adversity has since taught me! Will any one believe me when I say it, that it never struck me to go to another shop for my candle? But then I was only six years old. With desperate efforts I made ever and anon for the counter, and called out, 'A penny rushlight, if you please, sir.' All in vain. I was elbowed by the fat college servants and gyps. Then would I shrink back in silence and endure for a time such agony of suspense as I have never since felt. I tried the master, I tried the dainty assistants, I tried the porter, all equally in vain. Large orders came tumbling in, and I had in every instance to give way to my betters. At length the clock struck twelve, and the place became almost vacant. Only three old stagers remained, determined to empty a bottle of brandy with the grocer before they sought their homes. Now again I rush to the counter, for they were rattling up the shutters, and preparing to close. At length my tremulous voice took effect. The porter heard me.

'God bless my soul!' he exclaimed, so as to be heard by the others, 'if I don't believe this poor boy has been asking for a candle three mortal hours by the clock.'

'A splendid order!' said the college butler.

'Will cause a rise in tallow!' observed the grocer's assistant.

'May be,' said the porter in an under tone to the

foppish assistant, 'that the boy may prove as good a customer as some of the best of 'em to-night. At least he pays for his candle, while some of your dons who order a cartload of goods take a world of credit, and some of 'em never pay at all ;'—saying which, he handed me the candle.

It was snowing hard without, and with what I had endured and the terrible cold of the night I became almost paralysed. It was barely possible for me to find my way, notwithstanding that my visits to that detestable grocer had been frequent. I had no little trouble in threading my way home. At length I got into the lane, and gained the bedside of my dying guardian. There was fumbling in the dark for the tinder-box and matches, and after due time the cheerful light dispelled the gloom ; but oh ! trouble upon trouble, I held in my numbed hand only a wretched morsel of paper which had contained the rushlight, but the rushlight itself was gone—lost in the snow ! I stood breathless a moment until the match expired. A groan escaped my poor grandfather, and in another moment I was in the lane and the street hunting on my hands and knees for the lost candle ; but, alas ! to no purpose. Sometimes I ran wildly about to and fro ; anon I walked at my accustomed pace, and, muttering to myself, forgot all about the candle. Then I crouched under a tree and tried to be still, and then my lips blubbered up involuntarily, and I sobbed aloud. And there, cowering in the darkness, a death-like chill crept over me, my eyes grew dim, and gradually and irresistibly helplessness fell upon my limbs. Some little consciousness remained, and images of home rose up ; my name sounded in the blast, and then I

heard music in the air and all around. It was Christmas Eve to all the world, and college bells and church tower and steeple rung out merry peals, and well-to-do people steeped their toast in spiced wine and ale, gathered about blazing fires, and laughed and sung in response to the merry bells without. Meanwhile darkness, death, and despair filled the home of my childhood.

CHAPTER V.

THE FUNERAL.

IN summer time the churchyard of St. Margaret's was a favourite resort of children, who watched the sexton ever and anon as he came with pickaxe and shovel and lowered at last the parish dead one after another into their graves. At the season of which I speak, the mounds, the tombs, and black yew tree, were laden with snow when the sexton came and cleared a place for my grandfather. Four masons' labourers, old friends of my late guardian, came from a long way off, and carried him to the spot prepared to receive his coffin. Grandmother was confined to her bed, so I and little Lucy, a char-woman's daughter, were the chief mourners. The char-woman took us in charge. Little we knew or felt of the sorrowful nature of the event in which we played so prominent a part. The grave was dug in a remote obscure spot of the burying-ground, at the back of the church—a place gloomy and sunless as Friars' Lane—where the grass grew coarse and rank: a cold, chilly,

dismal part, where the boys seldom went to play even in summer. The four labourers set down the coffin. It was very light, 'no weight at all,' they said, 'considering.' The parson was a long time in coming to perform the service, which delay seemed not to astonish the bearers. They sat down upon the coffin. A number of common idlers (Old Joe the parish idiot was one) came and looked on, as they would at any diversion, and laughed and joked as though they had something to laugh and joke about. One of these roughs plagued and tormented Old Joe, and threatened to bury him instead of my grandfather, which made the poor wretch cry like a child. By-and-by the parson presented himself at a back door. When we returned to the grave I and Lucy went close up and looked down upon the coffin, and Old Joe stared about him and grinned like an idiot, as he was.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DOG-FANCIER.

AMONG the coffin-bearers at my grandfather's funeral was a young man who was related to the charwoman previously mentioned. His name was Ben Jones. He had started in youth as a mason's labourer, but, having a wild and roving disposition, he had got tired of carrying hods of mortar and took to the woods for support. Out of six years he had spent three in the county jail for the offence of poaching. Such, notwithstanding, was his known good-nature that, regardless of his repeated

appearance before the same bench, and which moreover boasted several clergymen, he managed to get off lightly ; and although he once broke a saucy keeper's head, he had hitherto escaped being transported. Of all his fancies the love of dogs was predominant, and once on the death of a favourite pup, which he had tramped sixty miles to procure, he fretted himself almost into a decline. I remember that he got a poor limner to paint a post-mortem likeness of the ugly little beast, and that he stuck the animal against the wall, in a favourite attitude, while the painter seized ' the points.' Ben had expected great things of the pup in question. Its mother had borne a good name, and its father was never known ' to open,' when hunting in Squire Blackmore's warren. Somehow or other Ben contrived to live on the best. He had fish and game in season, and he always had a shilling to spare a companion in distress. Yet Ben's resources were not only derived from nefarious sources. On the contrary, he carried on a legitimate business under the very eyes of the University authorities. He had a cottage on the banks of a canal, near a barge builder's, adjoining a brickfield, where he kept a number of valuable dogs for the undergraduates. And here also he kept hedgehogs, rats, and badgers, on which to exercise the destructive tendencies of the terriers, bull, and other choice canines. If ever any one exercised a wholesome influence on Jones it was my grandfather, and at the old man's grave he wept like an infant. It was known to all but myself, while we were in the act of interring the veteran scaffold builder, that his loved partner, my grandmother, was in a state of insensibility on her way to the poorhouse. Ben knew this, and he also knew that I was destined to the

same home of common wretchedness. The funeral over, the beadle came up to me, and in the kindest words he could muster took me by the hand and would have led me away ; but seeing Ben, whom I had long known, I clung to his coat and would not stir from his side. The beadle coaxed and Ben urged, but all the more I cried and clung to the poacher.

‘Leave go, will you,’ exclaimed Ben, getting vexed, but wiping his eyes at the same time ; ‘go after your grandmother, will you.’ Scared by the beadle in his livery, and cane in his hand, I only roared the more, when all of a sudden the dog-fancier was inspired with an idea, perhaps the first of the kind he had entertained in his life.

‘Why, what a fool I am,’ he broke out ; ‘the lad will be worth his weight in gold to feed the pups’ ; saying which, and without more ado, he seized me by the ‘scruff’ of the neck as he would a terrier, swung me under his arm and walked off, leaving the parish beadle in a stare of official bewilderment.

Of course the parish took no pains to find me out, and I entered in due course upon my duties as pup attendant, administering medicines during distemper and teething times, holding the little brutes while Ben shaped their ears to the orthodox pattern, or bit off their tails to the prescribed lengths. I learned to handle rats as though they were kittens, and became so taken up with the kennel that I found no time to weep over my early woes.

It was a lonely spot where Ben lived, by the canal side, in a hut made out of an old barge. He often left me at night, and came home himself at daybreak

bespattered with mire. For myself, I soon learned to be alone, and slept sound, for I had a dozen guardians at my beck and call, all ready to start up at the slightest approach of danger. In term time, Ben never went out at night, for he was busy with the students, who came by scores to look at new dogs, or take their own for a ramble, and one and all were kind to Ben and to me, and I often got a shilling given me for extra pains taken in washing and combing the dogs, or displaying dexterity in grabbing the rats, or 'tackling' the badger.

Sometimes we smuggled a bag of rats into a college. There were a class of students then, as now, who never read themselves, and did all they could to prevent their fellow students reading. This class had some difficulty in finding objects of amusement. They got weary of tormenting poor scholars who wore spectacles and darned stockings, and who loved study for its own sake, and who were compelled to study whether they liked it or not, in order that they might be able to command the means of living in the future. The roystering students feared the University authorities in about the same degree as my master Ben feared the gamekeepers. Tired of Ben's pit near the canal, they wished to have one of their own under the bursar's nose. They carried out their intention, regardless how it would have fared with Ben and his adopted son had they been detected on sundry November mornings passing half a hundred rats through a certain Gothic window which overlooked St. Bridget's Lane. A one-eyed gentleman commoner had loosened an iron bar to allow of the bag passing through with its squealing contents. Some such dialogue as this I have often heard take place between my protector,

standing in St. Bridget's Lane, and his patron at the casement.

BEN : 'There, your honour, I think you will find them in stunning condition,' forcing in the bag of rats.

GENTLEMAN COMMONER : 'Ah! you are a monstrous clever fellow, Ben, but don't come too near with that greasy jacket of yours.'

BEN : 'I think, your honour, that we shall manage to squeeze Black Bess and the Proctor (two terriers) through. They'll follow that boy anywhere, your honour ; they loves the very ground he stands on.'

On one occasion the precaution was taken of placing me under a bed with my rats and dogs while the gyp cleared away the breakfast things. This fellow hated us because his master had given Ben a parcel of clothes on which he (the gyp) had set his heart. He hardly dare tell the bursar of our sports, but he would mightily have liked to put the proctor on our track. While I lay concealed, scarcely breathing, with my dogs and rats, the servant, mechanically employed in washing the cups and saucers, was calculating what he might probably realise by the 'broken bits.' 'That pigeon pie,' he remarked audibly, 'will do duty again.' (The crust had been removed in a piece). 'I shall take out half a pigeon and put a whole one in with fresh gravy, and stick on the crust ; the pastry-cook will allow me something for it. Then here's a knob of butter, three commons at least, three brown loaves and two penny "busters," with some coffee and four eggs, which is cold, and not much account.' With these observations the thrifty gyp stooped down and placed his spoils under the very place where I was, and left the room. Ben taught his sporting dogs silence,

a desirable accomplishment when in echoing woods on the look-out for rabbits : but their master had never taught them not to eat when food was thrust in their way ; and, do what I could, it was not in my power to dissuade Black Bess from demolishing the pie and butter ; Proctor, being the weaker party, contented himself with the rolls and eggs. My principal enjoyed the story amazingly when he came to hear it, and so did the gentleman commoner to whom Ben related it secondhand.

As I have said, we did well in term time. In the long vacation Ben spent a good bit of his leisure at the ale-house. A few miles off the canal passed a dense wood, and Ben would often set out to it at night with his gun and his dogs, leaving me with certain instructions respecting his establishment in case he happened not to return. One very dreary morning at daybreak, Proctor and Black Bess came home alone. They slunk in and began whining. I thought they asked for food, and threw them their usual allowance. They refused it, and kept on whining as before.

‘ Hang the dogs,’ I cried. ‘ What can they be after ? ’ I thought they might be ailing, and put brimstone into their pan of water. The matter was cleared up at mid-day by the arrival of a down barge. Ben had been watched, attacked, captured, and put into jail on a charge of poaching and disputing with violence his lawful capture. The report soon spread, and before night the entire kennel had disappeared. As previously arranged, the proprietor of a rope-walk carried off the whole establishment. Luckily for the rope-maker, I was there to interpose my authority, otherwise he might have found the task of removal no easy one.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ROPE-WALK.

THE rope-walk whither Ben's dogs and plant were conveyed was familiar to me. A long narrow slip of land, bounded on one side by the canal and a thick hedge-row on the other, formed the united estates of the dog-fancier and the rope-maker. It was now my duty to turn a wheel used in rope manufacture. The whole of the dogs, save the two favourites known as Black Bess and the Proctor, were deposited with or sold to a fancier much in vogue with the students.

In my new occupation I sat in all weathers in a shed turning a wheel, whistling in mournful wise, or humming tunes which I picked up from day to day. Rope-makers sing and whistle all day long. At intervals I had to stir a cauldron of pitch and tar, a mixture used for tarpauling and coal-heaver's string. I made myself very happy in the shed devoted to the cauldron, roasting my potatoes, or toasting my meat and cheese, as the case might be: sleeping among the dogs in the hemp at night. There was something very snug and inviting in the odour of the tar and pitch—and very wholesome too. There was a belief at that time that the smell of tar was good for asthma, and in cold weather we often had visits from old gentlemen troubled with phthisical coughs, who came to inhale the fumes of the cauldron, deriving, as they fancied, great relief therefrom. Even people of distinction, members of the University, sometimes looked in for this purpose, for coughs were not confined to the poor and needy,

though most prevalent among them. Thus it came to pass that in a few months of hard weather I picked up money to the extent of seven shillings. Ben was captured in autumn, and the assizes did not take place till March, so that he had to lie in jail all the winter, and I went now and then to take him a steak or bit of tobacco ; but the bulk of whatever money I got I saved till the assizes came round, to aid in engaging counsel, and this I did in consequence of hearing my master, the rope-maker, conversing with friends of Ben on the subject. But in spite of all we could do, Ben was found guilty, and sentenced to hard labour for two years. I now lost all manner of chance of seeing him again during all that time. For days I sat ruminating, while turning the wheel, which I had acquired the habit of doing mechanically : all the time my thoughts were with Ben in his prison cell. What could I do for him now ? Who would give him steaks and tobacco now ?

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ORDER FOR THE HANGMAN.

ONE day, as I sat thus thinking, one of the jailers from the Castle came into the walk. He was a good-natured fellow for a jailer, and talked with my master on Ben's position, and not without feeling, for in common with all who came to know him, he was grieved that a fellow of such genial qualities should have been so cursedly apt in getting into scrapes. I know not why, but it seemed to

me that this jailer looked on me with a friendly eye, as I sat watching him. His errand was a strictly official one ; and not of a pleasant character. There was a man to be hanged, and he had come to order a rope for the occasion. A farmer in good circumstances had, out of malignant spite, set fire to a neighbour's homestead, and had managed to be, as he thought, very cunning in the matter, so that on his examination before the magistrates the evidence of his guilt was extremely slight. It was said that so certain was he of an acquittal that he had on his way to trial actually ordered a dinner to celebrate the event. He happened, however, to be a lame man, with a peculiar limp, and certain tracks discovered in the soft clay, in the neighbourhood of the arson, proved circumstantial evidence against him so strong that he was condemned to death. While I sat turning the wheel I thought that, should it fall to me to be sent with the rope to the Castle, I might, perchance, find means once more to see and speak with the incarcerated poacher.

It was so. Before daybreak I set out on my way with the fatal coil swung over my shoulder. It was a windy March morning, and rain and sleet came down in blinding showers. My way lay along the canal, and owing to the darkness I had much difficulty in keeping the narrow path ; and to make matters worse, the rope seemed to cling to my side, and weary me. Each huge, gaping drawbridge on the way groaned hideously, and overhead leafless pollards stretched out their scraggy arms. Every object which, one after another, became discernible, seemed a frightful shape. Yet the thought of seeing my old master gave me courage, and I kept up well on my journey. Day broke by degrees, and over



the leafless hedgerows, willows, and fields the sun threw a sort of amber-tinted light. Familiar objects stood forth, familiar sounds rung harshly out, and boatmen passed to and fro, with hasty strides, on the tow-path and wharves, who seemed to scan with curious eye me and my burden. Perhaps this ; perhaps the fulness of the day, now fairly dawned, threw me into a reverie. During the making of the rope much had been said of executions, and of particular ropes which had been used in recent times, which my employer and his father before him had manufactured, and of which pattern specimens had been carefully preserved, nailed up in the shed, where I sat by day, and slept by night. Many stories, too, were told, and dreadful incidents cited, in which ropes were the principal features, not omitting the silken cord which had suspended a noted earl in times long gone ; and thus my thoughts ran wholly upon the horrible thing whose weight well-nigh bore me down. The farmer for whom the rope on my shoulder was intended was a remarkably clean man, with white hair, and when I beheld him in the court he wore a neckcloth white as snow. Considerately enough, when I would have rested the rope upon the soddened ground, I was deterred from doing so by the remembrance of this fact, and exerted myself in order to avoid soiling the rope. It will seem perhaps incredible, and yet I was that affected by the influence of personal cleanliness, which, when exhibited even in a criminal, remains a virtue to command respect.

At length the Castle, with its awful towers, its keep and moat, appeared before me. In the presence of these familiar objects my mind shook off its load of sombre

thoughts. There was Friars' Lane, near at hand, among whose inhabitants I still numbered friends. Daring and strength revived. I reached the gate and rung the bell that summoned the jailer. It was the friendly jailer's face which appeared, and in a moment I had passed the ponderous barrier, and was in the outer yard of the Castle, where preparations for the execution were going on. The jailer's son was playing merrily near the lodge. He had gone to Mistress Vane's school, and we soon renewed our acquaintance. He sprang up from the step on which he was, and insisted on sharing my burden with him, and thus a procession was immediately formed. The jailer led the way, the rope-bearers followed him to a corner of the yard where a hearse was in waiting, and the carpenters engaged putting the gallows and drop in order. In those days friends were permitted to remove the bodies of culprits after being pronounced dead by the jail surgeon, and hence the presence of the hearse. The carpenters were assisted by prisoners, with whose strange garb I had become familiarised, but I had not succeeded in picturing to myself the sort of figure Ben might possibly present in the uncouth motley, and therefore I failed to distinguish him among the convicts. Not so with a voice at my elbow, which I at once recognised.

'Are you happy, master?' I asked, in an undertone.

'Pretty middling, my boy. Black Bess and Proctor all right?'

'As sound as a rock, but frets a little.'

'Where do you hang out o' nights?'

'I sleep along with the dogs in the shed, all very comfortable.'

‘Gets your tin at the rope-walk all right, I suppose?’

‘More than I want, master.’

‘More than you want, eh? Then just mind what I say. You know the elm tree over the wall, near the tower, on the keep yonder?’

‘Every twig of it.’

‘Very well,’ says Ben. ‘You just come to-morrow night, and throw a ball of pigtail over the spikes in direction of that tree ; it’s just possible I may put my foot on it in the morning ; and mind, if you keep your eyes open, you will often see me working on the keep ; and, according as you notice where I work, throw from time to time a bit of ’baccy always under a tree near the wall. Don’t pitch anything over but ’baccy ; and now get out of this place as fast as your legs can carry you, and if you tumble down, don’t stop to get up again’ ; saying which, Ben walked away to lend a hand in raising the fatal beam.

CHAPTER IX.

MARGARET TRENT.

IT was in vain that my new companion, the jailer’s son, pressed me to stay and see the execution. I followed Ben’s advice, and got out of the jail-yard with speed. Not that I was afraid to see the hanging. In those days boys were not squeamish. Pugilistic encounters were encouraged among juveniles. Of the sports which then prevailed, bull-baiting and cock-fighting were the chief. In fact, on my way from the jail that morning, I came

upon a large number of charity school boys who had been dismissed by their master for the day, in order that they might be present to witness the execution with a view to their moral improvement, a favour which they one and all seemed to appreciate vastly, most of them being in high spirits and playing at leap-frog to keep themselves warm.

About two hours before the time of the execution, I was standing near an inn in the vicinity of the Castle where carriers' carts were accustomed to stop, when who should I see, among the throng come into the town to witness the hanging, but the dog-dealer to whom Ben's dogs and goodwill of his trade had been consigned, in earnest conversation with a rustic girl, known to us all as Ben's betrothed. The carrier's cart never brought into market town a more beautiful girl than Margaret Trent, nor, as it turned out, a more unfortunate one. She had come from her home amid the moors, expelled by her mother who could not reconcile herself to her daughter's persistence in her love for the convicted poacher. This disagreeable fact had been communicated to Ben before his trial, and he had arranged with the dealer in dogs, his successor in trade, that the proceeds of the sale should be paid by instalments to her whose misfortunes he had occasioned and whom he was powerless to succour. A great villain was the man in whom he confided this trust. Margaret had come into the city by his design. He had persuaded her that she might there best while away the lonely period of the poacher's imprisonment. As for the money, he would make arrangements for forwarding it weekly. My appearance proved opportune. I was chosen as well suited to fill

the post of messenger. Margaret was borne down with grief, and only too willing to have come to her one whom she knew to be intimately connected with the poacher : and that I might be sure of the whereabouts of her lodgings, we all three went to the house where a single furnished room had been hired by the week in the most wretched neighbourhood of the whole city. Hooker's Hole consisted of a block of houses of ancient date, old as the Priory walls, which lay crumbling on the river side, close at hand. Here fishermen, poachers, dog-stealers, and boatmen made their homes. Many dark alleys, and no thoroughfares existed thereabouts, adapted to every sort of vice. By day one would have regarded the locality without suspicion. The peaceful stream glided past, the fisherman sat mending his nets, and the bargemen lingered about pending another of those journeys which they called a voyage. Night was the time to be dreaded by the poor and virtuous few whom circumstances compelled to live in Hooker's Hole. Not that noise and tumult characterised the place. The rigid discipline of the University laws rendered prudence necessary, but the vice which abounded was not the less to be feared because it was pursued in silence and in the secrecy of night. The room selected for the reception of Margaret was in the house of a stout widow, who, in spite of her coarseness, was in some respects a good sort of woman. She received the girl and myself with very good grace, all things considered, and did everything in her power to cheer the rustic maiden, promising her what protection she could give her. She said many kind things and made many kind promises in a voice far from gentle, but evidently intended to be soothing : for

great was the contrast when taking the dog-dealer round the corner of the alley she informed him in tones that might be heard, and were evidently intended to be heard, over the whole neighbourhood, that if he, the Bath Boy (such was the name he went by), did her new lodger, the poor country wench, any harm, either by word or deed, why then she, Mother Jones, would wring off his carrotty head. Mother Jones was well known to be a body likely to carry out her threat as far as practicable, and the Bath Boy seemed to respect the threat of the strong, muscular woman, for he protested that he never intended the girl any harm.

‘May be not,’ returned the widow; ‘and now I think of it, let’s have the first week’s pay—four shillings and sixpence.’

‘With all my heart,’ said the Bath Boy, paying out the silver bit by bit very reluctantly.

It afterwards became my task to extract the like amount from him every week. It was not always easy to find my man, and, when found, not easy to get at his money: but my perseverance increased with the obstinacy of the debtor. His haunts were usually the tap-rooms of public houses, his pastime playing at all-fours for drink and coppers. He was always accompanied by several ferocious dogs, and always in an ill-humour. On each Saturday night I haunted the Chequers, the Pheasant, or Blue Pig taverns. Waiting until nightfall, I approached the windows and peeped in, or listened at the door, and having satisfied myself that he was there, I boldly walked in and presented my claim. He would have set his dogs upon me, but for the fact that Black Bess, my old friend, was ever at my heels ready to tear

his best bull terrier limb from limb on the slightest pretext for so doing. Black Bess had a reputation in the respective tap-rooms of the town. The number of bulls she had pinned, the badgers she had drawn, and the rats she had extirpated made up a prodigious sum total ; unmolested, she was harmless as a leveret, but in an encounter her bite was death. While I was absent from the rope-walk, Proctor, my other friend, kept watch and ward over the hemp and tar barrels, so that, whether at home or abroad, I felt alike secure. If my body-guard had one fault, it was the very natural one of a wolfish appetite. Yet even this vice was not a burden to me, for they were well known and caressed by every butcher and butcher's boy in the town, and had the entire run of several college kitchens. It was no uncommon thing to see them walk in at dusk with huge bones and pieces of cold meat, which they had no doubt come by honestly.

But to return to Margaret, she eked out her scanty income by mending and washing for two or three fishermen who moored their punts at Hooker's Hole quay. Sometimes the fishermen paid her in fish, and sometimes in cash, as their means permitted. Great was the respect borne by these hardy men for the unprotected girl in her solitary room which I alone had liberty to enter. There everything was the perfection of order and cleanliness. When Margaret went abroad to make her trifling purchases, many eyes followed her movements ; and but that prayers were unknown in the locality, many a prayer had been breathed for her safety. With a bearing almost ladylike, and a voice like the sweetest music, my ward, as I might term her, was unable to read or write. Now it happened that I, who had barely learned the alphabet

and some score of words at Mistress Vane's academy, had become a tolerably competent reader. In the shed where I daily sat at the wheel, the boards were literally covered with songs, ballads, and last dying speeches, pasted up by my various predecessors in the not very exciting occupation of rope-walk wheel-boys. By dint of hearing these said or sung, and comparing the printed with the vocal words, aided by my school acquirements, I became able to construe the—for the most part—flimsy trash. Among the ballads there were some pathetic love stories tunefully worded with which I stored my memory, and sung them as I sat at my wheel.

CHAPTER X.

MARGARET'S FATE.

AMONG the subjects on which Margaret would speak on my calls, Ben formed the chief. The poor girl lived on in the hope of seeing her lover at liberty, of becoming his wife and reclaiming him from his evil ways. Sometimes she would question me concerning myself and my little wants, which in her eyes were no doubt of a grave nature ; for myself, I had become so accustomed to them that I felt quite puzzled what to do with a parcel she one night handed to me, consisting of coarse sheets, shirts, and woollen socks. In many ways she showed her great concern for my comfort, and I grew so partial to her in return that without doubt I should have laid down my life in her defence had occasion required.

Often would she ask me to sing or read to her, and often we wept in concert over the troubles of the 'Poor Fisherman's Boy,' whose story formed, as I have said, the subject of one of my pet ballads. After listening to the mournful ditty beginning,—

‘Down by the low lands a poor boy did wander,
Down by the low lands a poor boy did roam;
By his friends he was neglected, he looked so dejected,
The poor little fisherman's boy, so far away from home,’

she would take me in her arms, kiss the tears from my cheeks, promise to be my sister, tell me I should be her little brother, and that when Ben came out of prison we should all live together and never part again. On these occasions she would send me home to my shed, with Black Bess at my heels, cheerful, happy, and hopeful with the prospect of pleasant days to come. But those happier days were never to come to Margaret. While I was battling with the vile dog-dealer for the pittance which was to support her, and singing my ballads or reading any little trifle that fell in my way, she was dying inch by inch. The whole neighbourhood knew it. The roses had long left her cheeks; her steps were no longer light as she passed over the wharf; she no longer found strength to eke out the trifle allotted her by washing and mending. I was singing now cheerily at my wheel in hope of the happy home to come, and knew not how ill she was. About midsummer she took to her bed, and I found myself for the first time an unwelcome visitor. In a short time the terrible Ranters got hold of her, they having been sent, to use the words of one of the fishermen on the quay, ‘by the ’oman as brings the tracts.’ Poor Margaret knew that she was

dying, and as her end approached Ben's image seemed to become more distinct before her. Every moment was allotted to the concern she felt for Ben and myself. For herself she had no care. Late in the autumn she died, and then all at once I realised what it was to be friendless. Her kindness and sympathy, which I now bitterly missed, created within me a new feeling of distress.

Four young fishermen carried to the grave the poacher's intended bride—followed by six girls clad in white. I walked by their side down dark, crooked streets and narrow courts, in the more ancient parts of the town, until we reached the suburbs, where the parish church lay hidden within a clump of old trees.

CHAPTER XI.

A CHANGE OF OCCUPATION.

AFTER Margaret's death the rope-maker declared that he could make nothing of me as a wheel-boy. What the bellows blower is to the organist the wheel-boy is to the rope-maker, and often my master felt himself puzzled how to proceed, when, deep in some study, my wheel, unlike that of Ixion, came to a stand. Not willing to part with me, and quite unable to put up with me on account of my inattention, he 'stuck' another lad in my place, and set me to look after some swine which he farmed at some distance from the walk, near his own habitation. He did not, however, deprive me of my apartment in the shed. It was while thus attending to

my employer's swine that I first took a real interest in inanimate objects around me. The animals in my care had the run of some barley stubble, whence I commanded a fine view of the old Gothic city—

With glist'ning spires and pinnacles adorned ;

and, as I sat within a grove of elms that skirted the fields, I heard the remote bells and chimes in church and chapel tower. Sheltered from the blast within the hollow of a tree, I watched the leaves beating down in showers, blown hither and thither, now scampering pell-mell along, cutting, like living things, a thousand capers on the ground—now lifted up on high, now falling motionless at my feet as the wind-storm raged or slumbered. I was interested, and my thoughts occupied in a new way. When spring came my post changed to a green lane adjoining a wild common that stretched away for miles. Deprived of my hollow tree, like the lambs, I found shelter and delightful warmth on the sunny side of a thick, double, hawthorn hedgerow, ragged, neglected, and wild, which divided the green lane from the sterile common—an embankment of warm sandy mould, rich and fertile, with here and there a dark mound of decayed leaves and heaps of rotten sticks and pieces of bark forced into uncouth shapes and braced together by the blast. Here and there innumerable snails, with bright variegated shells, made their homes ; and as, day by day, the warm sun penetrated nook and cranny, they crawled out as if to scan the scene. Beauteous blades of grass shot up among the sunbeams, as it were, in an hour, to tempt the dwellers in those hidden nooks. By-and-by the parsley spread out its leaves and all the sweetest flowers of

the lane grew confident. The crumpled leaves of the cowslip and the primrose began to unfold. Sometimes the heavens were overcast, bleak, and stormy: and then the little living things crept back to their thorny hiding-places, among the sticks and stumps, and the flowers closed up and left me sad as before. Then came April, with its soft showers and misty, tearful skies, when amid parting clouds the lark sang his jubilant song.

But the lane below was always stored with wonders. Near a pool of water, in an unfrequented place, I found white violets among the grass, and on the border of an old dyke blue violets perfumed the air. For a while the secrets of this lane and all its riches were mine, and I was often so happy in it as to shed tears of joy. It had once been the refuse land of the populous town, and was now mostly deserted. On this common were ponds, where efts and frogs basked in the stagnant water. Gipsies encamped in the hollows, and water-carriers and market-gardeners grazed their asses. On the Sabbath the rag-tag of the slums came to play at pitch-and-toss, and fight their dogs and game cocks and one another. Nevertheless, my lane remained for a long time untrodden save by myself. At the end of it was a dismal field, which for years had been regarded as forbidden ground, a dreadful place fenced in on all sides alike from man and beast. The parochial authorities even in those days were, it would appear, driven to their wits' ends to know what to do with the sewage of the ten united parishes over which they presided. Having filled all the black ditches and adjacent streams, and created a pestilence which half depopulated the city, they selected the gloomiest part of the suburban common land, and thus ended

for a time the sewage difficulty. No living being was ever beheld on that spot during daylight hours; the very birds checked their flight in the air and flew in another direction. The skylark was never known to warble there. In course of years some new scheme was acted upon, and the old cart ruts to this spot became choked up, vegetation sprung into life, and when the time of wild flowers came their beauty seemed all the brighter in the privacy in which they blushed. So deserted and almost forgotten was that place that any one might have set up a right and title to those acres, without fear of awakening litigation. Things were in this vague and uncertain state when chance directed me to the place with the rope-maker's swine; and the spring was far advanced before any new comer arrived to dispute with me the possession of the Workhouse Lane, as the thoroughfare to my sylvan glade was called. But my pastoral reign was destined to a sudden and violent termination.

CHAPTER XII.

HOSPITAL SCENES.

ONE morning, when, like one of Virgil's shepherds, accompanied by my faithful friend Black Bess (the brave beast had all along been the companion of my solitary life), I drove my charge afield, I found the entrance to the lane partially fenced up, and the lane itself in possession of a number of boys headed by their father, a hunch-backed, forbidding-looking man. It appeared that the old

man had long been on the look-out for a plot of ground where he might build a hut, and raise cabbages for the market : and his sagacity had told him that the workhouse field was likely to serve his purpose as capable of great fertility at little labour or cost. Upon receiving some sort of authority from the workhouse board, before which he had too often appeared in the character of a pauper, he had set to work in earnest. My arrival on the first morning of these unexpected operations drew upon me the attention of the whole family ; and as the temporary fence offered little obstruction to Black Bess, she advanced upon the intruders with no sort of reluctance, followed by my charge and myself in quick succession. In addition to the old man and his boys, we encountered a huge, hungry cur, who, without any difficulty, set the pigs squeaking and flying in all directions. Black Bess seemed for a moment undecided what to do, so sudden had been the attack, but at length, understanding how matters stood, she sprang forward in her own noiseless style—it was the work but of a few seconds, and the mongrel cur lay sprawling and howling in the dust. At the same instant I myself was assailed by one of the gang. I had just time to observe the old hunchback drive a pitchfork through the side of Black Bess, when I was knocked down by a bludgeon carried by one of the junior ruffians.

On the following morning I awoke in the county hospital : my head plastered and bandaged. It might have been mid-day when I awoke, a blinding sunlight filled all the place. Old men, some with crutches, some with sticks, and wearing night-caps, hobbled to and fro, all ashy-pale and haggard : and on the beds were others

of all ages equally out of condition. After a time of fear, wonder, and surprise, I closed my eyes again.

When I next awakened, I found an elderly gentleman seated near my bed, regarding me with evident interest. With my eyes half closed I managed to return in some way look for look. Presently, another gentleman came in, who I afterwards learned was the house surgeon, when the following conversation took place.

SURGEON : ' This is the lad to whom I referred this morning when at breakfast. He was brought in yesterday morning with a broken head. He has been brutally treated by some rascals in the workhouse field. It appears that he was employed by Jackman, the rope-maker, to mind swine, and found good feed for them in Workhouse Lane. Yesterday, the field and lane were taken possession of by old Willis and his seven boys who set upon this poor orphan, and treated him as you perceive, and, it is said, killing his dog, in addition to scattering his pigs. Jackman gives the boy an excellent character, and is determined to prosecute the wretches for the assault, but as no one witnessed it, it may be difficult to get a conviction. Perhaps it would be better to devise means to protect the boy in future, than to make a futile attempt to punish the brutal aggressors.'

OLD GENTLEMAN : ' It struck me while waiting your coming in that the boy might be useful at the Hall. Do you think that his stay here is likely to be long ?'

HOUSE SURGEON : ' No ; a day or two at the most ;' saying which the doctor came to my side to ask me how I felt. To which I replied, that I felt very hungry ; and as I had not tasted food since the previous morning, this state of my stomach was not to be wondered at.

HOUSE SURGEON : ' You have heard what this gentleman has said ; would you like to go into service ? '

Not knowing what to say, I remained silent. Attributing my silence to want of intelligence on my part, the old gentleman suggested a consultation with my friends, which rather diverted the surgeon, who had my history by heart, obtained direct from the rope-maker.

HOUSE SURGEON : ' The fact is, Sir Anthony, the boy is an orphan, without a friend to advise him. The rope-maker, as I said, speaks well of him. '

SIR ANTHONY : ' From whom did the rope-maker receive the boy ? '

HOUSE SURGEON : ' The less said on that point, Sir Anthony, the better for the boy. Since, however, you kindly take an interest in him, you perhaps ought to know that his previous protector was a somewhat notorious poacher, who broke your keeper's head last autumn, and is in prison for that offence at the present moment. '

By this time the party at my bedside had considerably increased. An undergraduate, in whom I recognised one of Ben's former patrons, had joined the surgeon, conversing on very familiar terms. The undergraduate was an eccentric man. His success in his examinations was brilliant, to the astonishment of every one who knew not his habits. He spent his days as it were in the kennel, and vaunted that he never read, while the fact really was that his days of sport were also days of severe study. His sole companion was an old accomplished scholar, who had in youth taken honours and might have risen in the Church but for reasons unknown. These two were identical in taste—fast friends—they lived together and read together by day and by

night. This was the secret of our undergraduate's success before the examiners. The moment the young gentleman saw me he remembered me, and inquired after my condition. Having ascertained the object of the conference with Sir Anthony, he proceeded in a rattling way to settle the difficulty by providing for me himself. He told Sir Anthony that I was an old friend of his, that I was an excellent lad, and that the governor, his father, was in desperate want of a boy to be about the yard, and that he would undertake to introduce me at the Rectory as soon as I was able to stir. He added, that next morning he would provide me with a letter to the governor, which would make all things square.

When my visitors had left the room, I found that there had been several listeners as the conference was proceeding. Among them was, as fortune would have it, an elderly patient who had known my grandfather, and who had gathered up certain little facts of my life since his old friend's death, which had touched him to the heart, and the result was the following dialogue.

FIRST OLD MAN: 'They've got the poor boy a place some twenty miles off, but they said nothing about his getting there.'

SECOND OLD MAN: 'These fine folks mean well, maybe, but they never think of the difficulties of the poor.'

THIRD OLD MAN: 'Not they. It be ten to one the lad ain't worth a groat, to say nothing of a proper turn out.'

FIRST OLD MAN: 'Nothing but the rags he came in with, and them be smothered with blood.'

SECOND OLD MAN : ' It'll be a damnable shame to turn out the child in that way.'

THIRD OLD MAN : ' Old and feeble as I be, and I had that Dick Willis within arm's length, I'd be hanged but I'd play old Harry with him.'

This conversation was interrupted by the nurse, who came with a pan of warm water and sponge to remove the marks of the contest from my head and garments. With the exception of my smock-frock and boots, I still wore my only suit, namely, a pair of corduroys and ragged shirt : the corduroys tied up with string, in default of braces. While pursuing her good work, the kind woman learned what arrangements had been made for my welfare, and immediately made a suggestion of a highly practical nature.

NURSE (addressing old men) : ' Most like the lad will have some sort of livery when he gets to his place ; but it won't do for him to go such a scarecrow as he is : and now I come to think on't, I've a couple of striped jackets, and a couple of old shirts, that belonged to Bill, my poor boy, that died three weeks ago was a twelve-month, from the kick of a horse.' Here the nurse began to weep, and the old men turned aside their heads.

NURSE (continuing) : ' And now I think on't, why, I can make up the poor orphan quite a natty bundle. He'll want a comb and a brush, and a change of shirts and pocket-hankichers.'

SECOND OLD MAN : ' And I'll give him tenpence, which I saved towards buying a coffin—a trifling matter, not worth a thought.'

THIRD OLD MAN (an old servant) : ' And I'll give

him a receipt for cleaning plate, which I have got in my box under my bed. It may be useful to him by-and-by when he gets to be under-butler. God knows, it's never likely to be o' use to me again.'

FIRST OLD MAN : ' And he may have my pocket-comb ; for now my hair's all gone, what's the good of a comb to I ? '

SECOND OLD MAN (addressing the patients generally) : ' Who's got a pocket-hankercher to give away ? '

' I,' said a feeble voice from the adjoining bed ; ' I've a couple of cotton uns, almost new. He can have 'em both. They ain't likely to be of account to I, for I be given over.'

The several contributions were gathered together, the nurse undertaking to make up the bundle in due time, and to see that I had a good wash from top to toe, and that my hair was cut, and everything done to make me tidy.

At last a man came round, whom I was more glad to see than even the bundle so kindly improvised for me, and this was the distributor of the wooden bowls of broth, who brought me a good allowance, with a substantial piece of mutton in it, the effect of which was to finish my cure. In the course of the afternoon I felt so well that staying in bed became an impossibility on my part.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BUNDLE.

A WEEK after the scenes in the hospital described in the preceding chapter (my little matters were soon arranged at the rope-walk), I set out on my journey of twenty miles to take service in a gentleman's family. The various articles for my outfit were got together, washed and packed with speed, for, as the nurse remarked, 'I had jumped into a good thing,' and 'a good chance must not be thrown away.' I had hoarded up in the shed a heap of copper money, amounting to five shillings, and having nothing to spend upon clothes, I started in spirits, with minute directions as to the road and wayside ale-houses, where to rest and obtain refreshment. By mid-day I had placed eight miles between me and the ancient University where I had graduated only in misfortunes. It was not without pride that I despatched my dinner, beneath a spreading chestnut-tree in front of a small inn, and there in an evil hour lent an ear to the stable boy of the inn, and became the dupe of that cunning rustic.

By his advice I tried a short cut, which cost me a night in the woods. Following a small path through fields, meadows, and lanes innumerable, I ended my day's walk in a lonely entanglement of trees. Feeling about among the shrubs, I found a large tree trunk, and there sat me down, with no sort of fear, for darkness had been familiar to me. Anyhow, nothing remained for me but to rest where I lay. I had strayed into a bed of fern, both dry and warm, and I had the judgment to wrap and

entwine the foliage round my limbs, just as I had been accustomed to swathe myself in hemp on a winter's night in my shed. There I lay, with my bundle for a pillow, and began, according to my custom, to reckon up my days, and calculate upon a sort of future, until my reflections ended in dreams of Ben and poor Black Bess, cruelly slaughtered, as I had concluded, in the Workhouse Lane. I dreamt, however, that the brave dog still lived ; that after the conflict, where the hunchback had driven the fork into her side, she had hidden in the dyke, and that her brutal assailant himself had come to her and gently carried her to his hovel : not out of compassion, but on account of the value of the dog, which, as I have said, stood high all over the town. Then I dreamt that the poor animal had managed, in the man's absence, to creep away and follow me, limping on the road, and that I took her in my arms and carried her until I was ready to drop with fatigue, and wondering what I should do with my charge at the Rectory, where I should hardly be permitted to keep a dog. While deep in this last difficulty, and much perplexed how to act, the night wore on, and my dream was suddenly dispersed by the double report of a gun. I awoke at once, seized my bundle, and tried to rise ; but this was no easy matter. My ingenuity of the over-night in tucking the long fern leaves under me had been effective ; the leaves and stalks had become so interlaced that it required almost an equal amount of ingenuity to extract myself from the bed as it had taken to make it. While thus occupied, I had not perceived that I was undergoing the inspection of Sir Anthony's keeper, he whose head Ben had broken in the poaching affray. We recognised one another at a

glance. We had met at Ben's trial. I stared at all around me with amazement. I had passed my night in a wood where the tall pines made night of noonday. The branches overhead were all alive and noisy with twittering, cooing birds, while long vistas between the trees were lit up with slanting sunbeams, and golden pheasants crossed to and fro among the branches, screaming as they flew.

Without speaking, the huge brute in velveteen strode towards me, and taking a cord from his pocket, tied my arms behind, and then proceeded to open my bundle, which he had an idea contained contraband goods: for keepers imagine that every bundle contains game. In a minute my anxiously-collected outfit was scattered in all directions, and all the solicitude of the kind nurse at the hospital rendered of little avail. Pocket-comb, striped jackets, white shirts, and aprons were kicked about by iron-nailed boots without any sort of compunction. This was the second time I had been ill-treated, but now I had no one to help me. In my agony of indignation, had I had my liberty and means of revenge I should not have hesitated to use them. But there was no help for it, and I had to witness the trampling of my things into the grass, leaving me nothing to wear at my new place; making me a beggar again, all through mean, malignant, petty spite, for by this time the fellow must have known that I was no poacher.

‘Thee may think theeself lucky,’ he screamed, as he came towards me with a stick in his hand cut on purpose; ‘thee may think theeself lucky that I let thee go

with the skin off thee back, and don't put thee along o' thy master, the damned rogue.'

While he was yet speaking or screaming, his stick fell from his hand, and a huge black object passed me, and a horrible yell rent the air, and no wonder, for Black Bess—my faithful Black Bess—had got the keeper by the throat. It turned out that my four-footed friend had been found sleeping, or rather watching, by my side; that the keeper had driven her out, and discharged both barrels of his gun at her; some of the shots had taken effect, but not seriously.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RETREAT FROM THE WOODS.

FEAR, I suppose, lent me strength, or in my excitement I had loosened the cord with which the keeper had bound me, for to call off Black Bess and flee from the pine wood was with me the work of a moment. Of my poor bundle there was no time to think, much less try to collect. It seemed that the keeper was more frightened than hurt, for the moment the dog made away, he seized his gun and set about reloading it with great haste. What he meant to do with it I could only guess, for in next to no time my black friend was in the thicket, leading the way for his master, and it was fortunate for me that I found a guide so much to be depended upon. For a long time the dog kept up an even pace some yards ahead of me, looking back now and then to be sure of

my whereabouts. We often crossed paths, tracks made by woodmen, but never followed them. If I slackened my pace, the dog did the like. Towards mid-day I fell down from hunger and fatigue. I was starving, and saw nothing to eat—not so much as a berry. The ground was strewn with the dry leaves of the last year: for where I lay the blast came not: the leaves lay where they dropped, and so might I, for no one might find me in such a spot. It was a pleasant place too, and I should have enjoyed it much under other circumstances. I repeated an old experiment, made often at Mistress Vane's school, that of putting a pebble in my mouth; and I found some relief to my stomach, and amusement for my teeth. I looked around, below, above; every tree was budding and blossoming, but nothing in the way of fruit or berry was to be seen—not so much as a crab-apple. I shifted my ground, and found a hawthorn bush, and ate a handful of its half-sweet, half-bitter leaves; I tore up some flags which grew in a neighbouring ditch, and having a good useful knife in my pocket, pared away the roots, and got to the core. I will not say that the root of the flag is very exciting food, but that and some water afforded me some satisfaction. Black Bess declined the flags and hawthorn buds, but helped herself to water. In fact, she seemed not at all hungry. No doubt she had supped over night on a rabbit. Having in some degree satisfied my own appetite, and feeling now, by reason of the distance we had come, tolerably secure, I set to work to examine the condition of the four-footed poacher at my feet, and found about a dozen shot near the surface of her

hind quarters, which I contrived to remove: for the knife I had in my possession was one given me by a nobleman at Ben's yard, which contained several curious instruments, with the use of which I was not unacquainted. My great concern was for the wound inflicted by the hunchback. The left hind leg of the poor animal I had seen all the morning dangled, and was well-nigh useless. I found a swelling which required the lance, which Black Bess, accustomed to my treatment, allowed me to use, and when, the limb being relieved, her foot could resume its place on the ground I was afraid that the grateful capering beast would bark right out with joy. She seemed wishful to show me that her action was as free and beautiful as ever. But our conversation still went on by looks and signs. My guide now led the way, and I had no other thought than that of following her—through a copse, the border of which we reached in a short time, and, looking through the hedge, I was not grieved to see a chimney of very rude construction, whence issued bright, blue, homely smoke. My sense of smell soon detected the grateful odour of pitch, with which the rope-walk had made me familiar. My ear recognised the creaking of the drawbridge. I was near the canal. The smoke came from the lock-keeper's cottage. Black Bess had made the journey before. There was quite an agreeable meeting between the old lock-keeper and the dog. I had not observed Black Bess leave my side, but such must have been the case while I was looking out upon the cottage—I was surprised to see the incorrigible poacher bring in and place a fat rabbit on the hearth in a manner quite unconcerned. The catching

of the rabbit must have been the work of a few minutes. Possibly, Black Bess's mouth being accidentally open, the rabbit jumped into it.

CHAPTER XV.

HOMELESS.

THE good offices of Black Bess and my old master's name secured me a meal at the hut of the canal lock. In the afternoon an opportunity offered itself of a passage in the barge to the wharf at Hooker's Hole, that unwelcome den of my city experience. But where else could I go? By midnight we arrived at the wharf and landed. All through the tedious hours occupied in the 'passage' my mind had been sadly troubled. What explanation could I give of my return? Who would heed my account of the loss of the bundle? How could I face the nurse at the Hospital? Nobody would believe my story. So I determined to be seen no more than I could help. Besides, that dreadful keeper would have his score to settle with me. I knew not the extent of the mischief Black Bess after all might have inflicted on his windpipe. Possibly no great harm was done to the fellow, who was well muffled up about his throat. Still it was not a matter he would soon forget or forgive, and was hardly likely to let rest. On this account I made my way to inner Hooker's Hole, where no keeper in those days dared to go—where I lay about till morning, when Mother Jones, Margaret's old landlady, gave me a

corner, and with my capital of five shillings very slightly exhausted I provided a loaf and cheese for my own breakfast, and let out Black Bess to get one where she could, for the dog had plenty of friends in quarters questionable and unquestionable, as I have had occasion to mention before. By degrees, as time wore on, I left my hiding place; partly from taking courage and partly from restlessness, I began to go abroad. I paid a visit to Friars' Lane, called at the rope-shed by night to see how things were going on, and slept in some straw in a carrier's cart which stood at the back of St. Minfred's Church, in a gloomy place, little frequented by the townspeople. I was a vagabond to all intents and purposes. One morning before it was well light, I found myself in front of the county jail, looking up the keep. Ben's occupation on the keep ended a few days after the execution, and hence I had ceased to carry the arranged supply of tobacco. My only comfort lay in looking forward to the day of his liberation—still five months off. It was a long time to wait, and when I thought of it my hopes fell: not that my prospects could be, after all, very bright in that quarter. My trouble was to get Black Bess off my hands, to tell Ben of Margaret's end, and all about what she said and did. By-and-by I made acquaintance with boys similarly situated to myself, and we banded together for solace and self-defence, proving the truth of the old adage, 'Birds of a feather will flock together.' In our case the saying might have been true of birds without feathers, for some of us were sadly off for clothes. The police in those days troubled us not, for the simple reason that they had not been invented, and parish constables were pretty much harmless. The

genius of each of our band contrived to find its suitable mode of expression. Some boys held horses at indoors, others frequented the river bank, where boats were let on hire, or attended pigeon matches or fishing parties. A fisherman would adopt one, a poacher or a dog-fancier another—for these latter pursuits still had their followers: one thing only¹ was certain, that no respectable citizen would permit one of us to cross his threshold.

I remember a circumstance occurring about this time, which now seems trifling, which then however annoyed me very much. I was leaning against a tree in a field, where the gentry and their families often came. It was a summer day, and a beautiful woman daintily dressed passed close by me, leading a little girl gaily attired. I know not why, but my eyes were instinctively drawn towards this little beauty. But scarcely did our eyes meet than she began to cry lustily. The mother looked dreadfully concerned, and cast a contemptuous and threatening glance at me.

‘What’s the matter, my pet?’ she asked soothingly and coaxingly of her little charge.

‘That naughty boy looked at me,’ whined the dainty little beauty.

‘Naughty boy, go away! How dare you look at my little girl? Go away, naughty boy.’

I said nothing to this foolish, ill-natured woman, but the impression she made upon me rankled in my mind. I was coward enough for some time to avoid the gentry after this encounter with the lady and her pet. I kept more in the slums, where I was as good as my fellows. And so the days wore on, the summer passed, and autumn

set in : and poverty too, for, in the absence of the students at vacation, I had fewer horses to hold, and many little trifles derived from attendance at rat-pits failed me. Nothing remained for me but to poach. There were, however, degrees in poaching, and I tried to keep within bounds. I sought only those places where the land-owners were not game preservers, and consequently paid no keepers to watch. Fish and their habits were thoroughly familiar to me ; I knew shelved and hollow banks where the barbel and chub lay in hundreds, to use the language of Job the Diver, 'like horses in a stable.'

CHAPTER XVI.

LOOKING FOR A CRUST.

IT was at the end of August that our little band assembled on the wharf at Hooker's Hole to devise some means of getting a crust. As I have said, we were almost without clothes, and there was but one cap among nine of us. One wore shoes which were a great deal too large for his feet, and the consequence was that in any enterprise he was always behind. He of the cap succeeded better, because that article of dress often served as a bag to carry anything in which its owner chanced to light upon in an honest way. One possessed a tin saucepan which held water, but mostly served as a hat in emergencies of rain or sun. On the morning of the day in question our wits were almost at an end, when Saucepan, as we called him, suggested a mode of procuring a

dainty meal. As we stood upon the bank of the river, we observed a fisherman empty crayfish into the well of his punt. Straightway an idea was developed. We all ran into the river and commenced turning over stones and broken pottery and bones of animals in search of crayfish. We succeeded in finding a great number, more especially in the holes of the banks and among the willow roots which grew along the margin of the river. It was good sport to dabble in the mud. When we had got a cap full we landed on an island, lit a fire, and there, with a halfpenny worth of salt thrown into the saucepan, we very soon transformed the dark-brown shells to the brightness of the scarlet berry and into morsels fit, as we thought, for the palate of a prince. Sometimes we went fishing, but this sport was too precarious. 'No fish no dinner' was too often verified in our case. But even fish could be caught in the worst weather by those who could dive like a duck and keep under the water long enough.

There was a deaf and dumb man who lived in Hooker's Hole, called 'Diver Job,' who could catch a bushel of barbel and chub while the patient, shivering, blue-nosed angler on the bank could not get a nibble for the life of him. The season did not trouble Job, who dived down to the bottom of the river, crawled under the hollow banks and beheld the larger fish with their heads in holes like horses in a stable, as he said. He had a knack of seizing the large fish with both hands so that they became powerless to move, and, thus rising to the brink, Job threw his prey bounding on the shore until he had caught a shoal of them, and then tying the neck of his smock-frock he would put them in and march home

in triumph. It was free water where we fished, and nobody interfered with us. I say we, for nothing pleased Job better than to be followed by a pack of boys whom he delighted to teach the noble art in which he stood alone against all England. The students patronised Job, and threw money into the river, which he speedily brought up from the bottom in his mouth. He threw somersaults which alarmed us, and, diving from the top of stunted willows, would disappear under the water, where he could remain until he was almost forgotten—and then turn up a long way off, where least expected. We lived on Diver Job for several weeks, eating up all the smaller fish which he threw on shore. When we got tired of Job and his fish, and Job got tired of us, and set in for hard drinking, we all came into town to subsist as we could on those miscellaneous opportunities which came so precariously and served us so ill.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PRISONER RELEASED.

SULLEN October with its chill showers came at length, and the ponderous gates of the Norman castle were opened sufficiently wide to let out my old master Ben. It was fair-time, and all along the road in front of the castle, caravans of wild beasts and theatrical stages were displayed : while on the opposite side, beneath the yellow and now frost-stricken elms, were placed drinking booths. Possibly at his own request, Ben did not leave

the prison until it was dusk, for he was not one of those who made a parade of his delinquencies. He marked out his own course of conduct, and was prepared to pay the penalties he incurred. I had sat all day at the gate in company with the poacher's dog, cold, wretched, and hungry, yet borne up by the prospect of seeing Ben emerge into open air and liberty. He came at length, but with a look and manner which afforded little reward for my patience and watchfulness. In vain Black Bess assailed him with her caresses. He was very much altered. Barely speaking, he walked rapidly towards Hooker's Hole. Where else would a jail-bird go with any chance of obtaining a welcome? I followed as fast as my legs could carry me. We entered Mother Jones's door together, and found the widow preparing supper in anticipation of our arrival. She was as fond of Ben as she was of anybody, and looked upon him as a son almost. Ben scanned the brick-paved room. The lower orders have strange queer ways: Mother Jones was so little affected at our arrival that she never so much as turned her head, but kept on with what she was doing. She knew Ben's step: he was come, and that was all she cared to know.

‘What has made you so late, Ben?’ she asked.

‘I waited till dark that I might get away on the quiet. Where's Meg?’

‘Meg?’ cried Mother Jones, losing all composure at the mention of that name, and, turning full round, she said abruptly, ‘Dead and buried.’

Ben looked at me as if he did not exactly understand what was said.

‘It is true,’ I said; ‘she died last fall of the leaf.’

‘And we buried her like a Christian,’ added Mother Jones, thinking there was something soothing in that.

‘Four of the fishermen carried the coffin, and six girls in white followed,’ said I.

‘Buried her down in St. Stephen’s, right under the elms,’ added a woman who was present.

‘And everybody cried,’ said I. Ben was silent, and we seemed to think that there was some consolation in these details.

‘What did she die of?’ at length asked Ben.

‘Of consumption, brought on by grief.’

‘Did the Bath Boy pay up regular?’ inquired the poacher.

‘Anything but regular,’ said the widow; ‘he owes for fifteen months out of the twenty-four, the villain.’

‘She was starved,’ cried Ben in a raging, husky voice.

‘It is false,’ retorted Mother Jones.

Again Ben looked at me for an explanation. ‘She couldn’t eat towards the last,’ I said.

‘She had fish and flesh and fowl. Old Otter of Dinwell Lock sent her in a pike as long as my arm only two days before she went off,’ added Mother Jones, and she continued: ‘That boy there behaved beautiful to her.’

‘I knew that he would,’ said Ben.

‘She was very fond of that boy,’ said the widow, particularising me again.

‘Was she?’ said Ben, and, eyeing me from head to foot, he said, after a pause, ‘We must get clothes for the boy, Mother Jones.’

‘Or he will soon go stark naked,’ said the considerate woman, ‘for he has neither shirt to his back nor shoes to his feet, and now the nights are getting cold.’

‘We will shake some money out of the Bath Boy,’ said Ben, ‘and buy him some clothes.’

‘You will have some trouble to do that with the Bath Boy,’ said the widow.

‘Why so?’ asked the poacher.

‘Because he is transported,’ was the reply.

‘What have you done with my gun?’

‘You don’t want your gun to-night?’ exclaimed the widow, apprehensive.

‘You need not be afraid that I am going out to-night,’ said Ben. ‘I intend to raffle the gun, to get some clothes for the boy.’

‘I am glad to hear you say so, for a better boy never wore shoes and stockings.’

‘And shoes and stockings he shall have,’ said Ben.

‘I don’t think I could wear them now,’ I observed.

‘Oh, you will soon get used to them—but come and have your suppers, will you, for the food is getting cold and good for nothing.’

Here suddenly ended my experience of Ben, for during supper the conversation ceased, and soon after I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONVERTED INTO A MARKET BOY.

HAD circumstances permitted Ben to carry out his wishes, no doubt he would have parted with his gun to clothe me, but this was not to be. An old woman, whom I came to call aunt, but who I believe was but a re-

mote relative, adopted me only two days after the poacher's release from prison. The proceeds of the gun raffle carried the owner into his native village of Staffordshire, where he got superior employment in a quarry, and no doubt kept up his reputation as a dog-fancier.

The excellent woman who took to me had gone to much trouble to assure herself of my identity, which had become somewhat doubtful, even in the comparatively short period which had elapsed since my grandfather's death. She had come into the town to keep a market-stall, and had occasionally met with those who knew all my history—how, from having had a home in Friars' Lane, I had become a shoeless vagabond, wandering about the streets: and this seems to have moved her pity, and left her no peace of mind. She set others to work to find me, not succeeding herself in that benevolent intent. First and foremost the parish constable appeared on the wharf making fruitless inquiries, because those of whom he sought information naturally put him on the wrong scent, thinking that he meant me no good. After a while my relative resumed the search on her own account. At first she, too, did not explain her object, and therefore fared no better than the constable, but by degrees her respectability got understood and I met her, and after much parley, agreed to go to her cottage, and permit her to adopt me as her son, for, as she observed, she had 'neither chick nor child.'

Her first acts on my arrival at her home were to have my hair cut short, burn my clothes, give me a warm bath, a good supper, and put me to bed. These were perfectly salutary and necessary proceedings, but, little savage as I was, I did not like the abridgment of

my liberty they foreboded. My new mother had proceeded to manufacture a bed for me, by taking a dozen yards of close, coarse canvas, which she converted into a suitable sack, and went to a neighbouring barn where the men were threshing, and filled it with the beards of the barley. Little idea of a soft bed can be possessed by those who have only slept upon feathers—they should try barley beards, which do not clog and mat together as feathers, flock, and down do, but always keep in motion, shifting with every movement of the body, remaining soft and crisp at the same time.

With the assistance of a tailor who lived in the next cottage, a miserable, sleepless 'wight,' I was provided with clothes in a short space of time, and even while slumbering, a shirt was, as aunt said, 'run together,' in a rough sort of way: and, in fact, two days had not passed before I was comfortably clothed from head to foot—socks, boots, smock-frock, felt hat, and cotton pocket-handkerchief; nay, even a pair of worsted gloves were provided for Sunday, in order to impart an air of respectability to my hands and to keep them from chapping and chilling on the Sabbath.

It need not be supposed that my aunt, as I called her, was perfectly disinterested in her recovery of the lost boy. No sooner was I equipped than she took me into the market and hooked a basket on my arm. It was my part of the business to carry home vegetables and tripe. For the latter article we had an excellent reputation, on account of the remarkable cleanliness of our establishment. Thus I had given up liberty for slavery: nor did my relative stoop to coaxing in order to reconcile me to the change. She had an idea, poor

woman, that shoeless vagabondism had no delights; the market-boy thought differently, but some sort of consideration of which he was not wholly incapable prevented him hinting so. I went on all my errands for a time quietly and cheerfully, carried home little parcels each night, and never murmured for green fields and sunny banks and brooks. Sunday came, and I was sent to the church, which was only a stone's throw from our cottage. I was able to read, as I have said, and consequently was provided with a Prayer-book. Along with a few other boys I was ordered by the sexton to ascend a narrow stair, which led up to the back of the organ, where barely a ray of light could penetrate. This loft had been an addition made by some ingenious churchwarden, as a means of stalling up the rougher lads of the parish during service. Some of the boys brought peg-tops, some marbles, some eatables in the shape of carrots, turnips, and apples, to say nothing of bull's eyes and alicampaine. The scent of peppermint pervaded all the loft. The first Sunday I found my head jammed against one of those horrible Gothic ornaments, representing a fiend with his tongue hanging out, and his eyes leaving their sockets in the shape of a corkscrew. In the distance I could hear a monotonous voice, but could not make out what it said. The preacher was more audible, being near at hand, and I paid marked attention to the sermon. If I could not follow the argument, I could pretend to do so, and did make-believe most earnestly. Just, however, as the church was most hushed, a few minutes before the close of the discourse, some little wretch near me had the misfortune to drop his peg-top. The sound was ominously near me, and so it turned out,

for in the twinkling of an eye the ash stick carried by the sexton fell upon my head: my eyes struck fire, and a terrible pain shot through my brain. I went home to dinner with a bruised lump on my head the size of a small walnut. My aunt was very indignant at my ill-treatment, and threatened to patronise the church of the next parish for the future.

CHAPTER XIX.

ENEMIES TURN UP.

THE market days came round again, and things went smoothly on until one Wednesday morning, when the Hunchback, who has already been described as having reclaimed the Workhouse field, and half killed Black Bess, turned up with his pack of boys at his heels. He came into the market with a load of turnips. I knew mine enemy at a glance, but flattered myself that he would not know me. Scarcely had he set eyes upon me, however, than he pointed me out to his boys, a ragged and well-fed set, and as impudent as it was possible to be. They made no attempt in my aunt's presence to molest me, but contented themselves with making mouths. I took no notice, but went on with my work. Shortly after, I had to leave the market with some vegetables for a customer—a lady, who went on before, to show me the way to her house, 'in order,' as she said, 'that I might know another time'; but I had not proceeded far, before I was set upon by three of the junior hunchbacks,

‘might and main.’ Without ceremony one seized my hat, another upset my basket, a third dealt me a blow in the eye. In a moment, porters and butcher boys scented a fight, and rushing from all quarters formed a ring, and to see fair play. A burly youth in a blue blouse, and a steel by his side, sat me on his knee, and, chafing my hands against my thighs, prepared me for a regular battle. Another butcher did the same for my antagonist. Seeing the work before me, and smarting with rage and pain, all the lately-acquired varnish of civilisation disappeared in a moment, and the vagabond only remained. I turned to my second and told him I could not fight in my smock and boots, for I had not been used to them. ‘Bravo,’ cried the bystanders, and in a minute my feet and arms were free, and I was sent into the circle under the impromptu cognomen of ‘White-headed Bob,’ and told to darken the young hunchback’s ‘peepers.’ I did as I was told. The rascal tried to skulk away, but he was forced back, and soon his naturally hideous face bore marks of still worse disfigurement, in honour of the careful training I had received from Ben in the kennel, and kept up day by day with the Hooker’s Hole vagabonds. The hunchbacks could not fight the least morsel in the world, and I knew it. I challenged the whole of them by turns. Renewed ‘bravos’ came from the throng, and another hunchback was forced forward to enable me to give further proofs of my cunning in fighting, when my aunt rushed in upon us, broke up the ring, pounced upon the two hunchbacks, and scattered the crowd in all directions—to use an old simile, even as the dreaded hawk might scatter a brood of harmless chickens in a farmyard.

CHAPTER XX.

THE HUNCHBACKS PUNISHED.

OF course, I had speedily to put on my smock-frock and boots, and my aunt walked me off straightway to the town-hall, accompanied by the lady, who had seen how the affray commenced. His worship, seeing the character of the applicant and witness, immediately granted a summons returnable next day against all the hunchbacks, that is, against the old man and his three sons. They were only tried for the assault, but the mayor told them that he had a mind to commit them for highway robbery with violence. He had no doubt, he said, that they were a pack of ruffians. It appeared that a gardener had overheard the father set on the sons to assault me, and thus he was included in the charge. The bench fined them ten shillings each with costs, or a month's imprisonment with hard labour. The fine was reluctantly paid by the elder for himself, no doubt out of the proceeds of the load of turnips which he had sold the day before, but he left his hopeful offspring in the jailer's care. The lady, our witness, was known to the mayor, and took occasion to speak to his worship very highly of my aunt and myself, telling him how I had been adopted after a career of privations, whereupon he became thoughtful and looked hard at me and then at my aunt, of whom he inquired whether I went to school, 'because,' said he, 'the lad has a promising face, and might be made something better than a market-porter.'

My aunt curtsied and replied, 'that she had no doubt

but what his worship advanced was strictly true ; that she had only just got me off the streets, and had as yet had no time to devise what was best for me.'

'My good woman,' said his worship, 'I have a mind to render the lad a service, for his behaviour in the matter of yesterday has placed him in rather a favourable light in my eyes. He proved that he is able to take care of himself, and those who act thus deserve to be taken care of, for I have no patience with people who allow others to impose upon them without making all the defence in their power.'

Some of the magistrates on the bench acquiesced in the mayor's remarks, and his worship proceeded : 'It fortunately happens that I have on hand at this moment a 'turn' to put a boy into the 'Brown Coat School,' and if you are prepared to keep the lad in food, why then, the matter is soon ended. The lad will receive a good sound English education, and at the age of fourteen receive from the foundation sufficient money to apprentice him to a useful trade. I can speak well of the school, for I there received my own education, and I doubt not that it has retained its sterling character ; in fact, the same gentleman still holds the mastership as in my time.'

My aunt fell in with the mayor's kind offer without a moment's hesitation. It was the very thing she desired of all others. In fact, she had been all over the town to beg a 'turn' to place me in the self-same school. Giving his worship many thanks for his kind interest in my behalf, my aunt took me home well satisfied with the result of our appearance in court.

CHAPTER XXI.

EXPERIENCE AT SCHOOL.

AT the age of twelve, therefore, I became a member of an antiquated charity school in the city, which was by some considered fortunate in having for its master a very severe, hard man ; but this was not the opinion of the scholars. Those who chanced to be endowed with more than ordinary intelligence managed to escape being flayed alive. Some of them turned up in after times as respectable mechanics, or here and there a small shop-keeper. Such as happened to be dull at first were flogged into a state of downright stupidity, while any who commenced their career in this school in a state bordering on idiotcy were unceremoniously killed off. This amiable monitor of my young days regarded me in the light of his pet scholar. Yet he would not unfrequently threaten 'to cut me in two in the middle': or, by way of change, 'to flog me within an inch of my life.' It fortunately, however, fell out that he was so much engaged in operating on more deserving claimants, that I got respite from time to time.

I need hardly say that the parents of the majority were extremely poor, for only the children of the very indigent would consent to be thus flogged for their good. It was the custom in this school to place the last comer in the last place in the last class, and thither I was conducted. This post had previously been occupied by a heavy lad from a neighbouring hamlet, who laboured under an impediment in his speech. The master was

exerting himself in endeavouring to remove this rustic's defective articulation, when I took my place by his side. The word which accidentally turned up for testing the lad's powers of improved articulation, was 'aisle,' which he insisted upon confounding with 'oil.' The experiment was conducted in the following manner.

MASTER : 'Aisle.'

BOY : 'Oil.'

MASTER : 'Aisle.'

BOY : 'Oil.'

The master being armed with a long heavy leather strap, he dealt the unfortunate stammerer a blow on the back, or across the thighs, at every failure in repeating the word. The operation thus briefly described really lasted more than an hour ; but still the lad persisted in calling 'aisle' 'oil.' During this period he really must have received a hundred blows. I, who had nothing whatever to do with the matter, fell in for a few smart raps, which I attributed not so much to accident, or to any unfortunate proximity to the patient, as to design. This experiment was repeated on the following morning, and for several mornings, without success.

The next incident was one which monopolised the attention of the entire school, and well-nigh led to a large demand for parish coffins. This same boy who gained the victory over the master in the matter of pronunciation was in the habit of coming to school laden with the produce of the garden, the field, and the wood. Sometimes he brought turnips and carrots, wild apples, or the more civilised productions of the orchard. Occasionally he brought birds' nests and young rabbits, and more than once he introduced even snakes. Not unfrequently

these commodities fell into the master's hands and were confiscated. It mattered not what class of property was found in our possession, we were always relieved of it by the obliging master, who paid us in full in blows. We thus early acquired ideas of exchange and barter, which bore a strong resemblance to highway robbery. Bob, such was the stammerer's name, numbered among his acquaintances out of doors a lad who lived at a druggist's: and this lad had among other discoveries in his master's shop found what, deceived by the taste, he designated blue alum, but which was nothing more nor less than poison. Few would think that alum would be considered a great treat even by boys at a charity school, nor was it, but some of the lads were so badly off that nothing came amiss. 'Is it good to eat?' was the eager inquiry which arose on all sides when anything novel turned up. 'Is it good to eat?' was an interrogatory not intended to go the length of ascertaining whether the article in question was good eating, but merely whether it could be introduced into the stomach without danger to life; and this point being settled satisfactorily by either information or supposition, into the stomach it went. Thus, while no one pretended that alum was a treat, still, as it was accessible and not poison, and could be consumed quietly without attracting the master's notice, large blocks were consumed. Bob's 'blue alum,' as it was named, found a ready acceptance, and the consequence was, that on the third morning of my scholastic career a level half-dozen of the third class were seized with horrible pains. The master, who never stopped to inquire the cause of anything, commenced strapping us all round. The school rose

with excitement: something strange had taken place and was making itself felt beyond all power of the strap to arrest it. The secret at length came out, medical remedies were administered, and the six boys lost a valuable chance of escape from the miseries of school life. Poor Bob, who had not tasted the blue alum, but had innocently introduced it into the school, was, when the fact was traced to him, beaten into a jelly for his share in the transaction.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PICTURE MAGAZINE.

NOTWITHSTANDING the ill-treatment I met with at school, I contrived to thrive in my learning, and obtained in a short space of time the post of monitor. My success was due (so said my master), to my possessing an excellent memory. But the Rev. Dr. Shrewd, one of the visitors, came nearer the mark when he ascribed my proficiency to attentiveness. I early acquired the habit of reasoning on little matters which concerned myself, and came to conclusions respecting the condition of life in which I found myself, which differed from those taught me. From comparisons thus early forced upon me, I decided, for instance, that the sphere on earth of the very poor was no paradise. I further came to the conclusion that, if an opportunity occurred to better my condition, it would be no great sin to take advantage of it. I certainly foresaw that, in the event of my making any

change, it must needs be for the better, seeing that I could hardly take a step for the worse. Sketching was destined to be the form my ambition was to take.

My first studio was in the attic of my aunt's rickety cottage—a place used as a store-room for those productions of the garden which fell in my aunt's way to deal in, and which were intended for winter use. Thus had I been no better inspired than some of the old Dutch painters (or some of our present English painters for that matter), I might have found subjects for my pencil in the prodigious carrots, parsneps, and onions, which lay in heaps around my easel. But my genius aspired to nobler subjects. As monitor at the school, I was in the receipt of an income paid by the foundation. Twopence weekly was not a large sum, but then there were a few perquisites and little presents from the boys which one could hardly resist. True, they were intended as bribes, and unjustifiably accepted as such ; but one thing was certain—the boys were happier under my care, and made better progress than before. One of my scholars was the son of a college servant, who had enough and to spare of good diet, which came from the tables of the collegians. Another boy's father made brawn ; a third toffee, and so on. These may be said to have represented the better-off members of the school. I found that, as a matter of course, each of these boys brought a trifle illustrative of his parent's occupation. I found, moreover, that the master himself had no scruples in accepting a jug of dainty soup, or dish of brawn ; and that those who were thus enabled to sacrifice at the altar of the strap were flogged less frequently than other less fortunate lads—at least such was the case in term-time ; in vacation,

when the dons were absent, the offerings necessarily ceased, and the thrashings were again equally balanced. Sometimes I obtained a dinner in the mode I have described, and saved my twopence—the amount allotted for my dinner when there was no cold food in my aunt's larder. Sometimes, too, on my visits to the colleges, I obtained a meal from the servants who knew me, and were kind to me, as many of them were. They have little snuggeries, those servants, 'scouts,' or 'gyps,' as they are called, where they assemble after dinner in the hall and sort the remnants of the feast. Cold baked meats are not amiss when they are the leavings of learned divines, who are usually men of discernment in matters pertaining to the table. Many a slice of beef thus obtained in my boyhood might have won the praise of an epicure. I mention these things just to show the means by which I was enabled to follow my bent in the matter of fine arts. My aunt's twopences, my weekly stipend of twopence at school, enabled me to present myself every Saturday morning at the principal bookseller's shop in the city for my 'Picture Magazine.'

Were I in the poetical line, which happily I am not, I should certainly, at this stage of my narrative, take the course usually adopted by bards, and invoke the aid of some goddess before proceeding further. Full well I know that ordinary words will fail to give the faintest conception of the delight which I felt in the possession of the 'Picture Magazine.' And this joy was renewed weekly. There was the anticipation of the next number which gradually increased in intensity as the purchasing day drew near. On one occasion I mistook the day, and paid my visit for the illustrated periodical on Friday. I

the whole course of my life I had never before mistaken one day for another (the poor seldom do), and it was certainly a strange coincidence, that on that particular Friday only the parcel of 'Picture Magazines' had actually come to hand. It was an unlucky coincidence for the bookseller, for ever after I repeated the mistake, and presented myself six or eight times in the course of each following Friday, in the faint hope that the parcel might have arrived ; but alas ! always in vain. He was a good-natured man that shopkeeper, he had always a smile for me. My little head (which by the way, sometimes subjected me to unpleasant observations because it was large, scarcely reached up to the counter where I deposited my penny, and, in a timid voice, asked for my 'Picture Magazine.' The good shopkeeper saw my anxiety, which arose from the fear lest the parcel had not come, or that some rich collegian had forestalled me, and bought my copy. There was no reason to fear the latter alternative, for I believe that, rather than disappoint me, his 'old friend,' as he took to calling me, of my weekly source of inspiration, he would have risked offending the all-potent vice-chancellor himself. Had such a calamity happened to me, why then these sheets had never been penned, for I verily believe that I should hardly have survived the disappointment.

At the time of which I am writing, engravings after the best pictures of the old masters were appearing almost weekly in the 'Picture Magazine,' and here I may observe that, in my opinion, no wood engravings of the present day equal those somewhat early attempts to transcribe the beauties of the old master's compositions to paper. I shall not easily forget the particular Satur-

day when 'Jacob blessing Esau,' after Rembrandt, made its appearance. I have that identical cut before me now, while I am writing these lines. On that day I was trebly fortunate indeed. First, I met with my favourite old master Rembrandt, and secondly, the master at school had, in consequence of over exertion in flogging a desperate boy, brought on his annual attack of lumbago a fortnight earlier than usual. It was a glorious day. I not only ran and read, I flew, and devoured 'Jacob and Esau' with my eyes. Hard drinkers have been known to go long distances after an orgie, and find their circuitous and adventurous way back, and awake the next day in their beds, without being able to recall to mind a single incident which befell them on their journey home. I had but the faintest notion myself that I ran my head against a coal-cart; the collision passed as a mere trifle; at all events, I stayed not my course until I arrived wild and breathless at my attic studio with 'Jacob and Esau' in my hand. My old aunt was then sorting potatoes to complete a larger order than usual. She happened to look up as I entered. Never shall I forget her countenance as she stood aghast. The colour left her face. As she stared, I was induced to raise my hand to my head to feel what on earth could attract the old lady's attention, when I discovered that my blonde hair was matted with blood. In the intoxication of my delight, I had got a contused wound above my temple, the marks of which I shall, in all probability, carry with me to my grave.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ERRAND BOY'S FLIGHT TO SCHOOL.

IN addition to my attendance at school, I soon had also other duties to perform, hardly less irksome. For a weekly payment of one shilling and sixpence, I became errand boy to a small stationer, thus filling up every spare moment of my time between school-hours, my dinner, which I carried in my pocket, being not unfrequently eaten as I passed to and fro to the colleges with my parcels, at the top of my speed. Among my master's regular customers was a scholar and divine—a fellow on one of the foundations, who, out of a small income, managed to keep a mother and a sister—the latter as beautiful as an angel. This gentleman borrowed oratorios of my master, and in his delightful simplicity, and without design, managed to give me more trouble than almost all the other collegians put together. Scarcely a day passed, without my having to visit this poor quiet scholar. There was one luxury, of which he had long wished to avail himself without stint. His position as a fellow of the college gave him the privilege of using the chapel organ, one of the most perfect instruments in the world. One difficulty only stood in the way of thus rendering himself perfectly happy—that was, he had seldom the means of engaging any one to blow the bellows. One day, while discussing this difficulty, his sister cast her blue eyes upon me in such a way as to leave upon me the impression that something out of the common way was uppermost in her thoughts, and

in which I myself was in some way concerned. A small three-cornered note to my master revealed the plot. I was selected to blow the organ bellows for the best of brothers. My master, with his usual promptitude and liberality, returned an immediate answer, placing my best endeavours at the service of his fair correspondent. The favourable response to her request reached the lady, as she sat with her brother at luncheon at the window of a dark Gothic room overlooking the college gardens. Never shall I forget the expression of that face: never did I feel happier than in thus becoming the humble means of making happier one so good and so fair. Only St. Cecilia herself could have thanked me with so sweet a grace, as, handing me some fruit from the table, she requested me to go over to the chapel porch and there await their coming.

By the aid of a stool, I contrived to reach the handle of the bellows, and after a little practice was enabled to perform tolerably well the office of supplying the huge instrument with the essential element of wind. Straightway the vaulted roof of the chapel was filled with sweet music, and a soft small voice rose above the organ's swelling tones. The joy of the brother and sister was complete. It was a day in June, sunny and warm. The gorgeous stained-glass windows rained down a thousand bright and variegated tints upon the tessellated chancel floor, and lit up, as with an unearthly radiance, the famous altar-piece, where a fair woman with a neck of ivory, flushed face and streaming eyes, knelt at a tomb in a garden of roses. It was the Mary Magdalene, on the morning of the resurrection, as she appeared in later times to the rapt vision of an old Spanish painter.

The singer paused, the music ceased, and the lady appeared, as I thought, to censure me for my inattention. The picture had so engrossed my thoughts that I had unconsciously faltered in my indispensable exertions at the bellows. She, however, came not to censure but to thank me for the skill I had exhibited on the occasion, and to further arrange for another day. It was with some difficulty that I aroused myself to my ordinary frame of mind, for the old picture was before my eyes and in my thoughts. Had I not read, even then, of poor boys becoming great painters and of their being honoured by popes and emperors? And were not vague but alluring images floating in my brain? One of the conditions of art eminence was mine for certain—I was sufficiently poor. Giotto himself could hardly have started better in the matter of his finances: for at the moment of which I am speaking I was not, I believe, in possession of a penny piece.

My delightful dream of old masters and young genius in the organ loft, was, however, suddenly and cruelly cut short. The last words of the lady had scarcely ceased when a message from the clock-tower informed me that at that particular moment my harsh preceptor at the school had taken his place at the desk, and had commenced calling over the names of the boys, in which, as a matter of course, my own would not be forgotten. A tremor ran through my whole frame, and well it might. It was a terrible moment for me. One, two! The clock of St. Margaret's had proclaimed the hour, and out of the forty thousand inhabitants in that old city not one could be found to dispute the accuracy of that quaint, faithful herald of the fleeting moments. What the Horse



Guards clock is to the metropolis St. Margaret's was to Oxenbridge. The fact stared me in the face that I had to run almost for my life, nearly two miles, in next to no time ; and desperate as I was, I made the attempt. In a few seconds I was in the quadrangle and through the porch. The porter just opened his drowsy eyes, as I passed apparently without touching the stones, like as a 'Moll hern,' all legs and wings,¹ skims over the moor and along the sedgy shore of the silent stream, taking many turnings and windings, but withal travelling with desperate haste, out of sight before the sportsman is well apprised of his presence, much less has time to take aim. Vagabond boys in every part of the city saw distress in my speed, and got in my way : now and then a dog would rush out from some entry or door-step and hang impedingly on my rear. Onward, however, I flew. The streets and lanes were narrow, crooked and dark ; but I knew every inch of ground, I might say every stone, and was prepared for curves and angles innumerable. Twice I fell and scrambled forward as I got up. My cap with the red tassel in one hand, my task book ('The Chief Truths of the Christian Religion') in the other—onward I still ran. Now I cast my eyes up at the clock of some ancient tower, of which there were several in my route, hopefully—despairingly. Could I be doing the journey in no time ? Would the minutes stay their un-resting course that I might still escape being 'cut in two in the middle,' or 'flogged within an inch of my life,' as the case might be ? One clock, apparently at a stand-still, encouraged the hope which another, half an hour in advance, dashed furiously to the ground. The clock

¹ The Heron.

spoke no comfort. Breathless, heated, tired, hungry, terrified, I at length reached that dreadful place of martyrdom—the school. Four steps—a long dark passage, I am in the barn or schoolroom. Barns and schoolrooms were in those days pretty much alike. Instead of the chatter which usually greeted me on my entering the school, all was still and silent with well-known expectation. As I opened the door, a barely perceptible whisper, a noise as of many persons breathing in their sleep fell upon my ear : and there the schoolmaster—the executioner, the ogre to whom parents used to hand over their children for punishment—stood before me—or rather I stood before him. The strap—the dreaded strap ! a yard long, half an inch thick, with a slit in the end, curved high in the air, and, with a movement rapid as forked lightning, descended on my shoulders, over my chest, across my wrists ; hissing, scorching, blistering like a tongue of fire, licking off the flesh and boiling the very marrow in my bones.

On leaving school some three hours after undeserved punishment and degradation, poor Bob, whose own ill-treatment was still fresh in his memory, came and presented me with a nest of young blackbirds, which he had left at a shop near the school. Such were the only means he had of saying that he sympathised with me as I had often done with him under similar circumstances.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CHARITY BOY PAINTS A PICTURE.

BEFORE I saw the altar-piece of St. Margaret's Chapel, and six months before the appearance of 'Jacob blessing Esau,' after Rembrandt, in the 'Picture Magazine,' I had made sundry violent essays to paint a picture, but always failed for want of a little practical knowledge in respect of the mixing of colours. These attempts usually ended in my throwing picture, colours, and brushes out of the window, which exhibition of temper took with my aunt amazingly, because, as the ancient dame said, it reminded her so of my father. In those days the patent flexible tubes had not been invented, and painters carried their pigments ground in oil, tied up in pieces of bladder, using a tin-tack to puncture it when colour was required for use, replacing the tack to keep the colour from oozing out when laid aside. Now it happened that a painter of portraits came down from London for the season, and, by way of inducing public patronage, stuck his own portrait in the window of a popular barber. To this circumstance I trace some of the difficulties I experienced. In the background of the specimen portrait in the barber's window the artist had introduced an easel and a canvas, on which the features of an alderman were faintly indicated, 'rubbed in,' as we term it. There was also a table, on which lay a mahogany palette, with its complement of colours, brushes, and maul-stick. In contemplating this composition I took very little notice of the principal object. My whole attention was directed to the para-

phernalia of the studio, so ingeniously introduced. The easel, palette, and maul-stick I mastered almost at a glance. By turning two or three nights into day, and by the aid of some fragments of an old box, I contrived an easel, burning holes for the pegs with a red-hot poker, and, I might add, burning my fingers at the same time, and getting a frightful scolding from my aunt into the bargain. The palette cost me more trouble and ingenuity. I was not satisfied to have it fair and square. Oval was the orthodox shape, and oval I was determined to have it. But what material should I employ to construct it of?—this was of course the prior question. On this point the London artist afforded me very little clue. The nearest approach in point of colour of anything I could ‘clap my eyes on’ was the cover of an old book upon which I lighted on rummaging among my aunt’s old lumber—and this I forthwith appropriated. I had burnt a hole for my thumb, and had with infinite trouble shaped it to the true oval, when my venerable aunt returned from the market and apprized me that I had destroyed the cover of the only book she had ever set store by in her life, and which she had always intended to have had repaired, only that she had never been able to find a bookbinder to her taste. I was very sorry, but there was no help for it. This discovery did not however make me more careful, for on the following day I appropriated the lid of a potatoe-bin for a panel, and forthwith proceeded to copy on a large scale the group of ‘Jacob blessing Esau.’ And now my troubles began in earnest. The easel, palette, maul-stick, and brushes were complete (I had invested threepence in the latter articles); but in respect to the colours I was completely at fault.

That the little round forms in the picture on show at the barber's were meant for colours I had no doubt; but whether they were tied up in a dry or moist state never once occurred to me. Anyhow, I decided to keep mine in powder. To this intent I again ransacked my aunt's old lumber for gloves of bygone days, and herein committed another blunder in mistaking bladder for leather. Could anything be more wearisome? I found that I had to untie and tie these clumsy contrivances every time I wanted a morsel of colour, so that nearly all my spare time was consumed in that operation, and I had hardly any leisure for the more serious part of the business. I know not how long I might have blundered on in this way had I not by accident come to hear something of the mode employed by the London artist. I heard a boy say that he heard the porter of St. Margaret's say that he knew a man who knew another man 'as was sitting for his picture to the London artist what lived at the barber's in Booth Lane.' I had a pupil at school whose father was a 'gyp,' or bed-maker, at the same college as this porter, and I used my influence with this lad to get him to ask his mother to persuade his father to induce the porter of St. Margaret's to set his friend to press that other man 'as was sitting for his picture' to take an early opportunity to inquire of the London artist what he mixed his colours with and what he tied them up in. This rather extensive and complicated amount of machinery being set in motion, the answer reached me in the course of a week to the effect that the artist mixed his colours in oil with a palette knife on a slab of marble and tied them up in bladder, and got the colour out as he wanted it by pricking it with a nail, and so on. The

mystery was further cleared up by the good-natured artist sending me a partly-used bladder of colour, with the label attached by way of illustration. Forthwith my white lead, ochre, chrome yellow, ivory black, red lead, and prussian blue were ground in oil, tied up in bladder, duly labelled, punctured with tin-tacks, ranged in systematic order in my box, and everything went on smoothly for a time. Only one other difficulty remained: to wit, my attic was not sufficiently exclusive to contain the artist in his increasing importance.

Had means of display permitted, I know not to how many of my fellow pupils I might not have been tempted to show my amazing studio. One had gone as far as daubing in water colours an engraving of Richard the Third, but not one had any notion of the mystery of oil colours.

When everything was advanced with my copy after Rembrandt my aunt astonished me by a piece of criticism which disconcerted me at the time, but which I have no reason to think was much beside the mark. Chancing to come upstairs for a rope of onions which some customer wanted, my 'Jacob and Esau' caught her eye. I was engaged on Jacob's long beard as she came in.

'Well, aunt,' I exclaimed, 'what do you think of my picture?'

'Think, my boy!' she asked, 'why what can I think of it? What would you have me think?'

'I don't know, aunt,' I answered, not feeling much encouraged, as I thought there could be but one opinion, and saw no reason for hesitation in expressing it.

'Why, then,' said she, 'it seems to my dim eyes but

a poor melancholy daub.' And she continued kindly, 'Come down, come down, and have your supper, for I am sure you have been up here long enough.'

I was too hungry not to take the advice tendered me. The old lady was not devoid of intelligence, and I clearly had not made any favourable impression upon her by my first performance in oil colours.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DEBT COLLECTOR.

WHILE I lived with my master Ben, it was part of my occupation to idle about the college gates and by-ways with dogs which had to be shown to the undergraduates—and in after time, namely, in my shoeless period, I often frequented the same spots, so that I had every nook and corner of the place by heart, as it were, and I could have found my way from college to college blindfolded. Thus when I became errand boy I made short cuts and performed my commissions with expedition. By this means I had sometimes a half-hour at my disposal, and it would often take my fancy to sit down in some dark unfrequented nook and brood over the past or speculate on an imaginary future. My favourite resort was a zigzag lane formed of high black walls of great antiquity, which were varied only by a couple of back doors, which were never opened. It gave me vast pleasure to sit in summer time and contemplate the crumbling stones studded with gilly-flowers. The lane was like a trench or groove in the earth, out of which arose

lightsome airy towers, pinnacles, and spires, glistening with gilded vanes, the resort of grey-headed chattering daws. I was often attracted by glimpses of the college gardens, caught as I passed their dark porches. I would sometimes peep in at open chapel doors and feast my eyes upon painted windows and polished marble pavements: or I crept into halls and whiled away ten minutes among portraits of founders and benefactors. I was no longer a vagabond. On the contrary, the garb which I wore was a guarantee of my trustworthiness. I became known to all the porters and gyps as a responsible messenger, in the employ of a respectable shop-keeper. Among the undergraduates I was not always welcome, for my pocket usually contained a number of small accounts of long standing which my master entrusted me to collect as favourable opportunities offered. The first to whom I made application for money was a gentleman commoner who afterwards arrived at great political distinction. My master, or rather my mistress, for the wife always managed the money matters at the shop, sent me dunning, but neglected to qualify me for the occupation, so that when the true son of a nobleman laid the money before me I was unable to give him a proper acknowledgment. Thereupon, he took pen and paper in hand and instructed me so effectually in the matter that to this day I have had no reason to change the form of that receipt for any other. Many little troubles arose out of my debt-collecting among the undergraduates, for I became one of the most indefatigable duns in the University. I got access when an ordinary collector stood no chance, because no one suspected me, a mere school-boy, of the order to

which I belonged, of possessing half the effrontery necessary for this occupation. I became what is called 'a character.' My habits had given me a wiry frame, and a constitution which would defy a Siberian winter. With a worn and, I suppose, from what was said to me, a somewhat old look, I yet possessed activity of brain and limb. I was precocious without being rickety, sentimental without being morbid, except perhaps for a brief time. My questions, answers, and business readiness seemed to create no little amusement among some of the collegians of a light and mocking spirit. The mildest would insist that if I were no older than reported, that I must have made good use of my time. An old fellow whom I had dunned almost to death for eight pounds which he had long owed my master for stationery, told me that my head recalled vividly to his recollection the head of an old tutor of his youth. As this man was somewhat in his dotage, he in the end actually persuaded himself that I was the identical tutor referred to, and took, whether alone or before others, to addressing me as his 'most venerable preceptor.' The antique coxcomb made me indignant beyond bounds. Perhaps there is no worse habit than to be constantly annoying boys in this way. One or other perpetually calling me in the same strain gave at last a sort of consistency to this banter, which made a painful impression upon me, and I framed crooked ideas of myself, which haunted me at all times and made me sensitive by night and by day, until I took the resolution of escaping from the city of Gothic buildings and Gothic prejudices, which had almost refused me bread and shelter, and now wholly denied me peace.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CARICATURE.

MY aunt turned out after all to be very poor—poor almost as the vagabond she had reclaimed. Three months' rheumatism kept her from the market, and in the end her money was all gone, so that the trifle I got by running of errands became necessary to our existence. Warm weather brought her round, and she resumed her post ; but meanwhile I had been compelled to break up my studio ; my brushes had become hard, my colours dried up, and my strong passion for distinction reduced to a feeble state. What was to be done ? I lived on little more than twopence a day. Still, in the midst of famine a sort of art-love continued to hang about me, and all the pretty and quaint wonders about the city famous for its quaintness and beauty pleased me more and more, as older I grew.

In one of the narrow lanes right in the heart of the city were a group of old houses built against a college chapel, to which they acted as buttresses. In one of these tenements lived an excellent French artist, a drawing-master, whose windows usually contained about a dozen pictures, done in lead pencil upon card-board. Twenty minutes often fell to my lot between school hours and other duties in which to eat my dinner, and, not having a home available, I took my frugal meal in the streets, where I could gratify my eye at the Frenchman's window at the same time that I appeased my hunger. The pictures exhibited consisted exclusively of

views of the chief edifices and pastoral country around, to me familiar all my life. It appeared to me truly astonishing how pencil and paper could be made so surpassingly attractive. A rustic bridge or ruined archway would hold me captive for the full period prescribed for my dinner. Perhaps, if the pictures had been of a more complicated description, they would not have enlisted my interest so strongly. From the first a sort of vague notion entered my head that I might possibly one day be able to do something myself in the same way. I had given up painting in despair, but I might succeed with the lead-pencil notwithstanding. Intently I gazed on each sketch, and anxiously noticed each peculiarity of style, and the more I looked the more my interest increased, and day by day the thought and hope of becoming an artist took stronger hold of me and became more firmly fixed in my mind. For a long period I daily took my stand at that window, and devoured each new production with no less avidity than I did my meal. I should have begun pencilling at the first, but in addition to my want of time there was my inability to procure paper or pencils. In the absence of practice, I therefore made progress in theory. The shop of the artist was secluded and seldom troubled with any other visitor, and the interior was so enclosed that no furtive glance of mine could penetrate the room. Hence it never occurred to me that my frequent visits might give annoyance to the painter. The display of drawings in the window might, so far as I knew, have been got up for me alone, so seldom did passengers disturb me at my chosen post.

One day, however, at the usual moment when I had taken my stand, and commenced inspection, a curtain

within was hastily drawn aside, and lo ! for the first time the painter himself appeared. There was an angry scowl upon his face, and he darted a sharp look at his humble, though obtrusive admirer, which made me tremble from head to foot. At the same time he placed in the window a most atrocious caricature. Perhaps I had not seen my face in the glass ten times in my life, but the resemblance was not to be mistaken. There stood the little brown coat charity boy, with an enormous piece of bread—eating on both sides of his mouth simultaneously, and forming, on the whole, the most ridiculous counterpart that could be obtruded on my conscious gaze. Now, it happened that at school I had been making rapid strides. In arithmetic I had a score of superiors ; in writing I was nothing remarkable ; but my almost inspired replies to Dr. Shrewd, who came once a week to examine us in theology, went far to compensate for any deficiency in the aforesaid accomplishments, and on the very day on which the caricature appeared in public I had been promoted to the high rank of usher. My alarm, therefore, at the sight of the satirical portrait, knew no bounds, naturally bashful, and grown sensitive of late ; still I kept my ground at the window, and stared up at the abominable libel for a few moments in a sort of stupor, never doubting that I should become the butt of half the boys in the town. The blood rushed to my face at the bare thought. I who had admired, almost idolised, the genius of this man, to become in return his victim ! It was too bad. Did he know that I had just been elevated to power at school—made usher of eighty boys of my own age ? The artist stood like a fiend mocking me. So I thought. I was mistaken. He had merely mis-

calculated the character of his pertinacious visitor. The uncouth garb and ravenous state in which he had usually beheld me had excited his prejudice. It had not occurred to him that a charity boy could have a spirit as high, and as aspiring in its way, as his own. A few moments caused him to repent that he had taken so much trouble to annoy me. He had anticipated from me some vulgar approval at his, for the nonce, thoughtless act, and he had the mortification to see tears streaming down my cheeks. At length I rushed away. That night I sought my bed in a state bordering on distraction. The caricature never left me. All night long I fancied I heard the boys jeering me, and one family of lads in particular, ruder than ordinary, whom I had often encountered, stopped my way in the street, and would not let me pass. In vain I tried to sleep. My character was gone. The place would soon resound with my name, and I should lose caste in the school. It was more than now the practice with some artists to make money by etchings of well-known characters, such as cripples and dwarfs, which were sold in print shops for about a shilling apiece ; and I was to become one of these poor wretches, and acquire a print-shop notoriety, doomed to be followed by the rabble, and be the laughing-stock of brainless or thoughtless undergraduates. I might, perhaps, have some days' grace before the thing would become known. Could I do anything to induce the artist to remove the object of my annoyance. I could think of no expedient. I arose as usual with the sun, went to school in due course, and performed my accustomed rounds ; but when the hour of dinner came I need not say that I found a fresh place in which

to spend my time. Far within a sequestered churchyard, removed from every eye, I sat down upon a tombstone and thought the matter over afresh. I determined to visit my accustomed haunt at dusk, and, having formed that resolution, I grew more content, and despatched my meal. Haply it might not be there. I made a vow that, if the enemy had been so far obliging as to remove the dreaded sketch from the window, he should never after be troubled with the original. In accordance with this resolve, I went again in the evening, and stood some twenty yards off. The lights were not yet placed in the window, and I could not decide whether or not the nightmare of my sleep was among the sketches. I approached stealthily nearer, until within a few yards, when the servant, putting the candles in the window, set all my fears at rest. It was not there. Relieved beyond description, I turned to go, when a hand grasped me gently by the shoulder. It was the artist himself, but how unlike the look he wore the day before ! He was all compassion and kindness.

‘My young friend,’ he began, ‘why have you not been to see my pictures to-day ? I have been all over the city looking for you. I want to talk with you. I have wronged you. I will ask you to forgive me. Come into my house. You shall have tea with me.’ And thus he went on, taking away my very breath for wonder.

Was this the enemy who had robbed me of my rest, and almost broken my heart, but the day before ? In a few seconds I found myself before a cheerful fire, and had the gratification of seeing the caricature burnt, and of enjoying one of the most sumptuous meals of which I had partaken. Tea being nearly over, my host began :

‘You are an artist,’ said he.

I could not but betray my gratification at his assurance, but wondered how he became possessed of information of my endeavours in that direction. He noticed my astonishment.

‘You seem surprised,’ he continued. ‘You may not employ pencil and paper, may not be familiar with the smell of paint, but you are nevertheless an artist in soul.’

No wonder if I began to be of my host’s opinion; still I felt puzzled, and no doubt looked so.

‘You,’ proceeded my new-found friend, ‘have more of the real artist in you than the whole population of this ancient city put together, and I do not except the archdeacon himself, with all his fine pictures notwithstanding.’

‘Not excepting the archdeacon himself!’ I inwardly exclaimed. ‘Why, the archdeacon is considered one of the greatest living men.’ I was lost in bewilderment.

‘You shall become my pupil; I have decided that point,’ said my host, unheeding my silence. ‘When will you begin?’

All this time the kindly natured artist had been the only speaker. I had answered with my eyes, and the conversation had been sustained by their assistance. It now, however, became necessary for me to speak, and I answered that, ‘of all things, I most desired to become an artist’ (he seemed gratified at this confirmation of his impressions), ‘but that I was poor, struggling for bread, up early and late, and therefore I could not become an artist.’

‘We shall see,’ was the friendly and encouraging reply. ‘Can you not find time to take a daily lesson? You can

come to my studio between school hours, and of an evening. What say you? Will you come?’

I explained that ‘my school hours commenced at seven in the morning, that the intervals usually allotted to meals were in my case taken up by the occupation of an errand boy, that I took my food chiefly in the streets, and that the only real leisure I had possessed for a long time past had been spent at his window, as he had seen me; that if I gave up my situation I should starve, and there was no help for it.’

‘We shall see,’ he again observed, in his kindly manner. ‘Tell me, what is your salary?’

‘One shilling and sixpence a week, and some very small trifles besides, but not many.’

‘It is settled,’ said the artist. ‘I will pay you two shillings a week. Become my pupil, you will do me honour, and may be you will one day repay me when I am old and poor. I am not rich now: far from it; but I will do this. So we will consider the matter settled.’

CHAPTER XXVII.

PAPER AND PENCILS.

IT was Saturday when the artist burnt the caricature. When we parted, he told me to come on the following morning, as he wished to have more talk with me. I was at his house as the clock struck the hour he had named. The artist’s breakfast was in readiness. I

noticed many things which I had not observed the previous evening, for I had more leisure and more light. He was dressing in the adjoining room, but called out to me to take a seat by the fire. My eyes were never more active, nor more pleasantly occupied. The walls were covered with pictures, and the tables with eatables, and both had a fascination for me, for, in addition to my love of art, I had a sound appetite. A pot of coffee and a dish of ham stood before the fire. Everything was calculated to make me feel happy. The streets without were sunny, cold, and still, for the morning bells were hushed, and everybody was at home. I had breakfasted hours before, on those eternal two slices of bread and basin of discoloured hot water, which my aunt called tea, a sort of third mash from twice-brewed tea leaves, bought from college servants. The artist's table was laid for two. I was not invited, but this I found Monsieur Dalby (such was his name) assumed, for immediately he made his appearance, rubbing his hands, he, without the smallest ceremony, placed a chair opposite to his own for me, and proceeded to help me to a bountiful portion of the breakfast. All this kindness was near being too much for me. I was well nigh overpowered. Misfortunes out of number had been mine, but no very large amount of kindness had fallen to me. My heart throbbed for the first time ; my eyes dilated as if they would burst ; I felt a strange twitching in my under lip, sensation new to me then, as my friend kept talking, passing from subject to subject, speaking now of pictures, of the fields, of the woods, returning now and then at intervals to myself, and my prospects, and what he would do for me. I remember every word that he uttered, how every word was kind,

and laid in my heart the beginning of that faith in goodness, which has never since left me.

Breakfast ended, the artist busied himself with some drawers and slides in a large cupboard. It was no business of mine to watch his movements. I had somewhere picked up good manners ; and I occupied myself with the fire, the mantelpiece, and the ornaments. There was much rustling of paper, and opening and shutting of drawers. At length the artist called me by a Christian name I had never heard myself called by before. I answered to it readily ; he looked surprised.

‘Robert is not your name ?’ he said.

‘No, sir.’

‘Then why did you so readily answer to it ?’

‘I thought you meant it for me.’

‘I did. I wish to call you by that name. It is an odd fancy, which I would not explain.’

My silence expressed all I wished to say, and my interrogator was more than satisfied, as I could see by his looks.

‘See here,’ he called, ‘is a large roll of paper, which has been stowed away for years, and is getting discoloured. It will be useful to you ;’ saying which, he put the paper into my arms.

‘And here too are many pencils.’ I thought his voice faltered as he said this. ‘Take them,’ said he, ‘and put them into your pocket : leave not one : and here is a knife, and india-rubber and chalks. Take all, every scrap. And in a hurried, nervous manner, he proceeded to load me, filling my pockets and arms. I grew bewildered, and my emotions this time found relief in tears which washed away the last dregs of the vagabond.

When I got home I perceived that many of the articles given me were marked in a boyish hand with the name of Robert Dalby, and then I understood all about the name he had called me, and which, as it seemed his pleasure to use it, I accepted, until in process of time and affection it came to supersede my own.

My friendship with M. Dalby commenced in a manner so novel and so happy, continued for little more than a year, as, in order to benefit his fortune, he accepted the post of designer in a porcelain manufactory in another part of the country. At parting, he was kind enough to say that he left the city which loved him not, where he had prospered so little, proud at having found one sincere lover of art in myself, humble as were my pretensions.

I may add that he left me very little richer than he found me except in the results of that valued instruction and priceless and unexpected kindness I had received at his hands. I may as well own that I was richer also in ambition, and in possession of a folio filled with my own productions, which no one would buy, for they were at the best but poor copies of those drawings which in the first instance had attracted me to M. Dalby's window, and which had possessed so many charms for me. It is not much wonder that they possessed few attractions for the inhabitants. In those days the universities vied with each other in striving which could in the shortest space of time starve any artist who ventured to set up within their walls.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SCHOOL COUNCIL.

I HAD now entered upon my fourteenth year, and become entitled to my dismissal from the Brown-coat Boys' Charity School, and to a premium of seven pounds, the sum usually devoted to apprenticing out-going boys. The choice of a master was no easy matter to me. The artistic education I had received did not lessen the difficulty. The school council barely listened to my petition that I might be made a painter of pictures. The rule was to find trades, not professions, for the boys, and I, in common with five or six others, were ordered to find masters who would take us for the money awarded. I prayed them to let me follow the arts, and produced my folio of sketches in support of my pretensions. I call to mind how our treasurer, a portly, wealthy coal merchant, who had risen from nothing (as he told us ten thousand times), looked down upon me from his slightly raised seat. My application appeared to him so extraordinary that he involuntarily dropped the well-known volume entitled 'The Whole Duty of Man' (the book given to lads on leaving school) and stared me right full in the face: while a rich brewer, also one of the quorum, no less astonished, followed the treasurer's example, and the following interrogatory commenced.

BREWER: 'Has the boy any friends?'

MASTER: 'I am not aware that he has. Have you any friends, boy?'

BOY: No, sir.'

MASTER : ' You have an aunt somewhere ? '

BOY : ' Yes, sir. '

MASTER : ' Is she well to do ? '

BOY : ' She has not a shilling in the world. '

MASTER : ' Just so. '

BREWER (again addressing the master) : ' Have we any precedent of a boy of this stamp on the books of the school ? '

MASTER : ' I am happy to say we have not. '

COAL MERCHANT : ' Your remark is well timed. This boy appears to have altogether mistaken the humble position in life into which it has pleased God to call him. When does he leave school ? '

MASTER : ' To-day. '

BREWER : ' Then I fear that we shall not find time to convince him of his error. '

MASTER (suggestively) : ' A sound flogging might still be of service. I have always found the birch very effective in cases of this dogged description. '

A master tailor in a small way of business here took part in the conversation. He was apparently amused with the turn matters had taken.

MASTER TAILOR : ' Has the boy troubled you much in that way ? '

MASTER : ' As a rule, he has not been flogged more than three or four times in six days. '

MASTER TAILOR : ' What have been his offences ? '

MASTER : ' Keeping bad time, for the most part. '

MASTER TAILOR (looking towards me) : ' Ah, how was it you managed to keep such bad time, boy ? '

BOY : ' I have had to run of errands between school hours, sir. '

COAL MERCHANT : 'Why did you run of errands, boy?'

BOY : 'Because I could not help it, sir.'

COAL MERCHANT : 'Because you could not help it, eh ! How was that?'

BOY : 'I ran of errands first of all, sir, because aunt kept her bed with rheumatism.'

COAL MERCHANT : 'I don't see what rheumatism has to do with running of errands.'

BOY : 'Please, sir, I had nothing to eat.'

COAL MERCHANT : 'Oh, I see, you ran of errands to get something to eat. When did you eat it when you had got it?'

BOY : 'I ate as I could, sir, and sometimes I did not eat at all, sir.'

COAL MERCHANT : 'That was very remarkable conduct.'

MASTER (addressing me) : 'Don't prevaricate. When did you make those sketches?'

BOY : 'I did some at night, and on half holidays. The last year I did not run of errands, because the gentleman paid me to stop at home to draw.'

COAL MERCHANT : 'And who is this gentleman you speak of?'

BOY : 'Mr. Dalby, in Zigzag Lane, sir.'

BREWER (addressing the master) : 'Do you know anything of this Dalby?'

MASTER : 'He is a mad-brained fellow, driven here by the revolution, a republican and an infidel to boot. He found no encouragement here, and in consequence recently disappeared from the town, and I rather think not a little in debt.'

I need scarcely say that the worthy master was drawing upon his imagination for these disparaging facts, which he supposed to be descriptive of every foreigner.

BREWER : ' In debt, eh ! Are you in debt, boy ? '

BOY : ' No, sir. '

BREWER : ' Are you an infidel ? '

BOY : ' No, sir. '

BREWER : ' Did you ever draw on Sunday ? '

BOY : ' Yes, sir. '

BREWER : ' And why did you do that ? '

BOY : ' I couldn't help it, sir. '

BREWER : ' How not, help it ? What do you mean by that ? '

BOY : ' I was so very fond of drawing, sir. '

BREWER : ' Did you not know that it was wicked to draw on the Sabbath ? '

BOY : ' Yes, sir. '

BREWER : ' Then why did you do it ? '

BOY : ' I did not draw on Sundays at first. '

BREWER : ' What did you do at first, then ? '

BOY : ' I only cut my pencils and looked at my drawings at first—and then I drew a little. '

BREWER : ' And then a good deal ? '

BOY : ' Yes, sir. '

BREWER : ' And then, by little and little, you have gone on and on, until you have arrived at the condition in which you are ? '

At this point the coal merchant looked at his watch, and reminded the brewer that it was dinner time, whereupon that gentleman ceased his labours of interrogation and concluded by remarking that I ' should prove of little credit to the institution, or of service to myself, or

anybody else.' 'There is no knowing,' said the coal merchant; 'for, as I have often remarked, I came from nothing myself.'

With this qualified prediction of the man who had 'risen from nothing' I was relieved from my disagreeable position, received the customary volume entitled the 'Whole Duty of Man,' and went forth into the town to look for a master. My aunt could not sleep a wink for the responsibility which thus devolved upon her. She consulted her neighbours, and the report that 'a lad of promise' (so went the description) being in want of a master spread over the parish: and among the first a popular barber beckoned me into his hair-cutting rooms, and offered me the opportunity of assisting him in clipping the hair of urchins and shaving grooms and carters. He assured me that he would make a man of me and put me in a fair way of making my fortune. He said he had long been in want of a youth who could sketch. No profession, he insisted, stood more in need of an artistic capacity than his. There was plain work, it was true, which did not require extraordinary talent; but in the higher branches of the business a good eye, skilful handling, and cultivated taste were indispensable, as I should discover. I declined the hairdresser's offer with many thanks; and something which I said elicited a laugh from a half-starved parish apprentice who seemed never to have laughed before; and while the barber was pulling his ears I walked out of the shop.

A poor, tottering, tallow-faced tailor also fancied that the 'bit of money,' the seven pounds, might be useful to him, as no doubt it would, if appearances were to be trusted. He had come to make my acquaintance from

having made my clothes. He had ventured on a contract to manufacture the heavy, tough, leather breeches worn by the Brown Coat Boys, and had made his estimate by far too modest. The material moreover had proved new to him, and had cost him many a sigh. Before the seventy and odd garments were completed he had broken his shears and undermined his constitution most woefully. He was candid enough to tell my aunt all this and to add that he had never thought to be able to endure the sight of a Brown Coat Boy again, so long as he lived ; but that, taking all things into account, seeing that he was well nigh past working for himself, and he already owned a number of apprentices, three from the Brown Boys, two from the workhouse, and four of his own sons, making up the cabalistic number nine, he was resolved on attempting the decimal quantity, and undertook to take me, provided I would promise to be very steady and obedient—all of which I civilly declined : and thus ended my opportunities of distinguishing myself as barber or tailor.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE OLD CARVER.

DURING my intimacy with M. Dalby I frequently saw an old carver at the studio. He came to consult my instructor on the subject of church restoration. He had been engaged in the toilsome labour of restoring one of the most ancient and interesting churches in the city.

Occasionally I had gone to the church with drawings which the carver had commissioned my master to make for the guidance of his staff in their operations on the crumbling walls. The old carver was skilful beyond anything I had seen in my life. He would spend an incredible time in freeing the delicate tracery of the monkish chisel from paint and whitewash, plastered and daubed thereon by modern churchwardens. It was impossible not to perceive how light, how chaste, and crisp the ancient workmanship came out beneath the fingers of the patient manipulator. But what surprised and pleased me most was to see the carver replace absent portions which time or damp had decayed or barbarians defaced. The stone seemed to grow before my eyes, and the foliage to spread itself out even as I had seen it do on the warm bank in springtime. My eye wandered from the work to the tools, from the tools to the workman. It was all magic to me. There was music in the very click of the steel, that woke up the echoes of the vaulted church like voices answering one another. With intimacy came confidence, and I would venture now and then to pick up a chisel from among the many that lay upon the planks, where the old man sat, and curiously examine it as I would a thing that had life in it and would do what it was bidden to do.

In my troubles I was suddenly reminded of the old carver. Would he take me as his apprentice and teach me the wonders of his art? the thought relieved my mind from all its doubts and griefs. I went to his house; he was still at his work. I flew to the church. It was night, and only a glimmering candle revealed the whereabouts of the worker. I scaled the ladders and



crossed the scaffolding at the risk of my life, in order to learn my fate before I slept. How many a poor boy has been troubled as I was then, seeking, longing for an insight into those mysteries (for art and mystery go hand in hand) which should bring him profit and honour in the future. I approached the old man in his solitude like an apparition, but he started not. He calmly laid aside his chisel, and, taking up the candle, surveyed me from head to foot. In a few words I made known my desire. What better introduction could I have than to be able to call myself the pupil of M. Dalby? He received me with animation. His dream was fulfilled. He would have me, he said, although I brought him not a farthing. I might spend the seven pounds in clothes and tools. I should become his right hand. When would I begin? Why not begin then? I had no objection: he lent me tools, and to work I went. Before the clock struck nine I had earned a shilling to buy some supper, and not before I wanted it. It had been an anxious day. I had not eaten for twelve long hours.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CARVER'S HOME.

WHENEVER it was practicable, which was frequently the case, the old carver and myself worked together. He liked somebody to talk to who had no wish to interrupt his enthusiastic garrulity; and no one of any taste would desire more, or better, than to listen to the anecdotes of

work and workers with which his mind was stored. He had passed his life in churches and cathedrals. He conceived that churches were built and allowed to decay 'in order that they might be restored.' With him restoration was an art. To model, cast, carve, and pick, were all the delights he had. The rubbish of the dark ages, apparently without form or purpose, came out sharp and precise from his touch. He could see through an encrustation as thick as a wall. All the churchwardens of successive generations, with their lime, mortar, and paint, had not been able so far to efface the handiwork of the mediæval artist but that my master could recover it; and so far from blaming the 'Goths,' he owed them a debt of gratitude for the trouble they had been at to destroy. But for Vandalism, he used to say, he might never have been a restorer. Months passed by, and the chaos of mouldering architecture began to wear marks of intelligent design, and every day and hour the work increased the friendship between the patriarch and his assistant. In the dark winter I have seen the old man numbed with the cold, and have crept stealthily away from his side, and procured from his housekeeper some soup, coffee, or a cup of spiced ale, and then we have sat down together, removed from the chatter, banter, and boasting of the masons and labourers, and enjoyed such happy intervals of rest as only thoughtful and hearty labour yields. If I am asked what I think of those early days of my life, I might be led to say that I could not wish to see them over again, and yet I was often so happy that words could but ill express the serenity that took possession of me. There was in that union of the old and young heart something very

strange—a reversal, as it would appear to observers, of the order of nature. In my very boyhood Old Age singled me out, as I have indicated, and, laying its attenuated hand upon my shoulder, exclaimed, ‘Thou art mine! sit thee down, and let us talk of the past.’ The respect and affection I entertained for my companion were not of that kind which every well-ordered child instinctively feels for grey hairs. It was long before I could comprehend the meaning of this difference in my case, but my experience has since explained it to me over and over again. The old carver’s heart was still young. The heart of the true artist never grows old.

In addition to executing large commissions for the restoration of churches and cathedrals, my friend and master had established a manufactory of *terra cotta* ware, consisting of vases, gods, goddesses, heroes, and philosophers, chiefly after the antique, but some few of them from designs by a contiguous Italian, one Signor Bezza. This Signor Bezza lived with his daughter in a cottage near the workshops, and acted in the capacity of foreman over a number of men, two of whom also were natives of Italy. The various casts in plaster or clay were distributed upon the floor, or in the garden, arranged in seeming negligence, yet in reality for the better effect which they thus produced.

My master’s house contained several large rooms, which had been constructed in a somewhat rude fashion out of a spacious barn or granary, the outer shell or original exterior being preserved intact; the uncouth effect of dark beams and bricks being mitigated by a profusion of ivy, which had grown unmolested until it well-nigh choked up the windows. I found, on going to

reside in this queer mansion, almost every available portion of space crowded with carvings in wood and stone. The housekeeper, indeed, found great difficulty in putting me up a bed. After much discussion and many experiments, I was accommodated by an encroachment upon the largest lumber room—a grim example of Gothic genius, and a very limbo of worm-eaten decorations. By the aid of a huge, clumsy screen, mortar, and whitewash, we extemporised a very excellent domicile and study, into which we admitted sufficient sunlight by curtailing to some extent the trellis of dark ivy leaves without. In less than a week I felt as settled in my new home as if I had been born and reared in it. For a few nights only my dreams were a little disturbed by the presence of a flickering light and constant rumblings among the carvings. It was an inveterate habit with the old carver to linger among his antiques long after I had gone to rest. The curiosities underwent a sort of nightly classification and labelling. It was the belief of their owner that every morsel contained in the museum would one day ‘come in,’ and under that impression the meanest fragment was preserved with miserly care.

In the more dilapidated buildings which received our renovating attentions it sometimes became necessary to consult our crumbling stores for authorities, and they often would have been of great use in clearing up doubts as to the style, shape, and expression of certain griffins and other monsters which had been destroyed by barbarous zealots in olden times, but it somehow usually happened that the right monster was not to be found in its right place in our collection. The collector had a marvellous faculty for confounding his dingy relics.

However, one good at least came out of them—they served to make my venerable instructor exceedingly happy and contented, especially at seasons when no great work of restoration was on hand. I had some suspicion that the antiquary classified his faithful pupil with his antiques, for he made it a rule never to go to bed without paying me a stealthy visit, to see whether I was safe, and I wondered that he did not label me with the rest of his treasures.

The window of my studio looked into the pleasant little garden where Signor Bezza cultivated wall-fruit and herbs for salads. My window-sill was formed by an ancient wall or buttress, which in summer was covered by gilly-flowers of the richest fragrance : and when not engaged in modelling, drawing, or carving, I was accustomed to read at this casement, for I had become a student in books, and my studies included not only works bearing directly upon my profession, but extended over a wide range of standard literature, both in prose and in verse. It was seldom that I lay down at night without passing a brief period of meditation at my window. It was here that I summed up the actions of my early days. I was now happy, and could look back and smile at the little vicissitudes through which I had passed, and which my faithful memory retained in all their vividness of reality. Often I thought of my first, great, absent friend, who taught me the rudiments of my art,—and of the old man who daily imparted to me something of the experience of his long life, and who cared for me as if I had been his own. It seemed that at this time I had no want.

Three years had passed away, and during all that

time I had scarcely been idle for a day. I had grown comparatively wealthy, and had laid up a store of art-treasures for the future. In addition to my library, I possessed many fine prints, which I had selected from the folios of a printseller in the city. Moreover, I had a number of casts from ancient sculptures which the Italian, Signor Bezza, had given me. He had often vainly tried to allure me from the 'mediæval barbarisms,' as he termed our Gothic, to the glories of Greece and Italy ; but I had so long dwelt among quaint examples of the monastic chisel, that I was as averse to the graceful proportions of the Athenian sculptors as the owl is to the light of day. There came a time, notwithstanding, when the Signor, with his Dianas and Apollos, gained the victory over the griffins of the dark ages. Hitherto he had only invited me to the workshop, and while he confined his illustrations of the beautiful to inanimate stone and plaster the conflict between the classic and the Gothic was undecided. One night the sculptor invited me to partake of a dish of salad, prepared after the manner of his own country, in order that we might discuss the great art question at our leisure. The Signorina was present, and, what with the father's arguments and the daughter's grace, the whole subject of the *Antique versus Gothic* appeared in a far more interesting and classic guise. That night the period devoted to meditation at my casement was much longer than ordinary. At parting the Signorina had, with her own hand, presented me with a basket of peaches from her garden, and also a piece of blue silk embroidered with gold, which I chanced to admire, and which she told me had formed part of her holiday dress when a child. In

return, I promised to paint her a picture, and to introduce the precious relic of her childhood along with the peaches, after the manner of a certain Dutch master.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE OLD CARVER'S STORY.

THE morning after my visit to the cottage of Signor Bezza, I found myself in a very unsatisfactory state of mind. My master had, only the previous day, set me to model an eagle, which he had been commissioned to carve in oak, for the reading-desk of one of the churches which we had renovated. With shame I say it, the eloquence and beauty I had found at the table of my new intimates, the Italians, had almost obliterated the eagle from my memory. My sketch, which had been approved, lay neglected on the bench, while the clay for the model lay covered up with damp cloths, untouched. The old man, as was his wont, came to call me to an early breakfast. 'Earn your breakfast before you eat it,' was one of his wholesome, old-fashioned maxims. I had not earned my breakfast on this morning, and made no scruple of informing my master of the fact.

'Not earned your breakfast?' he asked in the kindest manner.

I pointed to the uncovered clay.

'You are unwell.'

'I was never better.'

‘What, then, am I to understand?’ he half wonderingly observed.

I directed his attention to a group of still-life, consisting of the fragment of an antique vase, around which I had arranged, in graceful folds, the blue embroidered silk which the Signorina had given me, so as to relieve most forcibly the peaches which I had placed in front on a slab of rich Sienna marble: the whole presenting a choice of forms and a variety of harmonious tints which would have charmed the heart of that famous painter, Van Aelst.

The carver fixed his eyes for a few moments on the group, and then asked what it meant.

‘If,’ said he, ‘you have grouped these objects merely for contemplation, I shall offer no objection to your harmless whim, whatever I might feel respecting a medley of Flemish, Grecian, and Italian productions; but, if you have set your mind on painting these things, may I ask from whom you have received the commission? I trust it is all a momentary freak of fancy.’

‘Sir,’ I answered, with the frankness he had taught me to observe, ‘this is no freak of fancy, but a matter upon which I have set my heart. I will rise early, I will work late,—the eagle shall be my masterpiece, but only say that I may paint my beautiful composition.’

‘And when it is finished, and when you have out-rivalled the Dutchman, what purpose will it answer?’

‘It will enable me to keep a promise I have made, and which is of such a nature that I cannot break it. It is but twelve hours since I last saw you at St. Margaret’s Church, and then I had not a thought of this undertaking,

nor had I care or sorrow, or doubt or misgiving on any one thing.'

'Tell me no more. I have foreseen this hour and dreaded it ; my daily vigilance has not preserved thee from the blandishments of Signor Bezza. You are in love with his daughter, and—but I cannot blame you.' Here the old man passed his hand over his brow, as though the thought gave him anguish.

'Sir,' I exclaimed, 'do not misjudge me. I am your pupil still—will do all that you ask of me.'

'I know it ;' sighed the old man, 'I believe that you are true to me ; and that you will continue faithful to me when you have heard the story of my troubles, I do not doubt.'

After breakfast, which passed without further remark, the old man began a narrative to which it was impossible for me to listen without surprise and emotion.

'I am old enough,' said he, 'to remember the time when in this country native talent, and all that was venerable and national, were sacrificed to a false taste for what was denominated the 'classical,' but which in fact was nothing more than a hollow mockery and a pretence. For a time the solemn architecture of England, the forms and patterns of her religious temples and ancestral halls, were set aside for feeble imitations of Greek and Roman types. Noblemen and country squires built their park lodges after Athenian models, and their summer-houses after Roman villas. They raised altars where no sacrifices were intended ; they had shrines without priests, and gods and goddesses without religion. People gave themselves classic airs and graces. Ladies of rank were painted or sculptured in the characters of Diana and

Venus, and Silvia and Delia. Obese aldermen fancied themselves Roman senators, and members of parliament persuaded themselves that they bore a strong resemblance to the Demostheneses and Ciceros of antiquity. Every statue put up in honour of the dead or the living appeared in the garb of some illustrious consul or emperor of the classic world. Poetry and painting followed in the current. Amorous bards, who had slumbered for ages unheeded, were exhumed as it were from the grave, and scholars and famed versifiers turned the Latin of Ovid and Sappho into the language of Shakespeare. I came when this artificial art, as I will term it, had reached its culminating point, and rescued the Gothic chisel from the rust. I found discerning patrons who could distinguish betwixt the true interests of art and the vapid and fulsome plagiarisms which had so long prevailed. The reaction was, as I persuaded myself, complete. It became my task not so much to create as to rescue the sacred relics of our forefathers from the obscurity to which neglect and disrespect had consigned them. Thus have I spent my days among the blackened beams and rafters, where the owl and the bat made their homes in the carved and emblazoned roof. I found quaintly tessellated pavements immured beneath wooden planks, and slender columns of precious marble buried beneath whitewash and plaster. With knowledge and energy, in patience and endurance, I pursued my course, often unrequited, to rescue those rare monuments of the past ; for next to the creative artist I esteem the worker whose labour tends to restore lost traces of power and originality in the works of the great dead. The mock classic rage declined, as I thought, for good. I was deceived. Like the returning

tide of the sea, the false classics returned to cover the land with stucco, plaster, and terra cotta. Again the park-gates and mansions of the nobility were made to caricature the ancients, and gardens and lawns to mimic their solemn groves. Again the antique appeared in every variety of material, and adapted to unheard-of purposes. Architects, sculptors, glass-blowers, potters, brass-founders, and furniture-makers fell in with the revived order of things, and squares, streets, town-halls, session-houses, city churches, and even jails and village chapels were constructed after the antique. Again the Gothic sank into its former state of neglect. It grieved me sore to part with my old hands. Where I had work for a score of able carvers, I found hardly sufficient for myself.

‘It was at this turn in my affairs, when almost disheartened, when I had no longer youth on my side, that this Signor Bezza came here bragging of his Cellini-like powers. I will not tell you of half of what he could do—it would be far easier to enumerate the few accomplishments of which he was *not* master. He would, he said, furbish up our crumbling old city for us. He would, with a few strokes of his wand, transform our ruined walls into a second Athens. He would remould us and give us new faces. He would so embellish us that we should not know where we were. He described our city as more resembling the churchyard of ancient kings whose very names were lost in the remote past than the abode of the living. We were everything that was dingy ; we were the rubbish of barbarism itself. Our spacious English halls, of English oak, he designated barns and stables ; our cathedrals were dungeons : and our churches malt-houses. He said all this and more. I have given

you a sample of his off-hand pretentious style of talking. He had a smother and modester tone for the gentry. He worked his way: he exhibited works of art as his own which were the fruit of other men's genius. He got pity, admiration, and encouragement from some of our best men. He was brought to me all smiles. He was described as a man without money, but abounding in talent which might be turned to account. Of all men in the world, my friend the Archdeacon St. John himself stood his advocate, and implored me to take up with the new stucco-and-plaster madness. "It will bring in money," said the Archdeacon. "You want a fortune for your boy." My boy was just leaving school. "You want a fortune for your boy." I had not thought of that. For the first time I lost some little of my faith in the Gothic chisel: and my poor boy, the image of his mother, looked up, as it were from the tomb, in support of the project. "What would you have me do, Archdeacon?" I asked. "The matter is very simple;" he replied, "conform to the times, which will not conform to you." "True, Mr. Archdeacon," observed Signor Bezza, "the matter is very simple. What can be more so? Give me a shed, a few loads of sand and clay, and permit me," he said (addressing me), "to build you a simple kiln, and I will make you wealthy, provide a fortune for your child, and not once interfere with your taste for native architecture; you will as you please continue your invaluable restorations." Well; the Archdeacon, God forgive him, succeeded on behalf of his Italian friend. Signor Bezza came, and, to do him justice, he laboured like a slave. At first bread and water would serve him and his companions (those two Italians who even now form part of his staff). The

kiln was built, the sand and clay procured, the models made or imported from town. It was all very wonderful to see. No Englishman could have done it in so short a time, and for so small a sum of money. My son entered his department, and showed talent ; and when I saw my boy in, as I thought, a fair way of business, I will own, I felt less prejudiced, and parted with my savings with less reluctance ; in fact, I spent every available pound upon the new scheme. I can say that from the first hour of our acquaintance the Signor had not given me an uncivil word. If I rebuked him, he would express his obligation to me. If I resented any act of his, he would bow his head ; and yet he is not mild by nature, but wrathful in the extreme. Deceived by his fair speech (and I believe that he equally deceived himself), one fatal day I made him a partner in the terra-cotta department. Henceforth he became my master. He took to my boy, and flattered me. The Signorina was then a child, a beautiful child. I see them now, growing up together like brother and sister, the olive and the rose entwined, as the Signor said (my boy was fair, and the Signorina dark). But where now is my boy ? Victim to the most enthralling and ruinous of all vices—gambling. This Bezza, under the pretence of giving harmless salad suppers (after the fashion of his country) invited other adventurers, reckless like himself, turning night into day. Of course the terra-cotta trade failed, and my boy, my once dutiful boy, soon half beggared me by his follies and extravagances. But I will bring my story to a close. The boy lies by his mother's side, where his father will soon follow him.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SIGNORINA'S PICTURE.

THAT Signor Bezza had not acted honestly by my master was certain. Something might be attributed to prejudice on the part of the Gothic carver. The savings of fifty years of anxious toil had been dissipated, and the old man rendered almost dependent upon the labour of his hands in extreme old age. From myself, his apprentice, he had, he would kindly own, received all the attention and affection of a son. On reflection, he did not desire me to neglect the picture which he found me desirous of painting. On the contrary, he urged forward the work, and gave me leisure, in order that it might be perfected before the peaches had lost their bloom. He even went so far as to promise a costly frame when the work was complete, and confessed to me that he would render his assistance with pleasure, for that he loved the Signorina as the early playmate of his lost boy. The peaches being the most perishable objects of my composition, I had prudently completed them first, reserving the drapery, vase, and marble slab.

Since I had parted from M. Dalby I had never ceased in my leisure hours from cultivating my taste for the art of painting. I had found the more facility in pursuing my evening studies, owing to that gentleman having left for my use nearly the whole of the furniture of his studio. Thus provided with abundance of materials, I had made a practice of selecting for study such objects in nature as the garden furnished : either of fruit, plants,

or flowers; sometimes bringing in the distant prospect as seen from my window. In carrying out our restorations, we more than once obtained access to famous picture galleries, and, among many other works of the old schools, I had been particularly struck with two pictures by Van Aelst, a famous painter of flowers, fruit, insects, shells, and costly plate. As a carver and modeller, I had acquired much instruction from the contemplation of this artist's productions. His execution, to my mind, seemed miraculous. One of the two pictures in question, to which I gave the preference, was very simple in its arrangement; three fresh, ripe peaches, with a few leaves attached, lay upon a silver salver, beside a Venetian goblet of the purest mould, and apparently as fragile as a soap bubble, so that, looking at it, one fancied that a gust of wind might dissipate it into air. This goblet formed a mirror, in which was vividly portrayed an almost interminable Dutch street, with its quays, canals, and shipping, just as it would appear through a lattice. A heap of grapes, well set off by a few sharp, variegated leaves, a table-cover of olive-green velvet, and some insects, completed the group. While I do not regard extreme finish as the highest excellence in carved work, still I must admit that a delicate manipulation and high finish have ever appeared great charms in my eyes. When the artist first surveys the shapeless block of wood given him for the purpose of realising some set form, it is no easy matter to reduce the cumbrous mass into a working state. The process called 'bosteing' is very difficult. Unless the worker has a good eye, he runs the risk of cutting away too much wood in some parts, and of leaving a superabundance in others, especially where

he works without a model ; and even where the model is present, the mechanical appliances used by wood-carvers are commonly confined to ordinary callipers, so that a good eye for proportion is still indispensable. As far, then, as the mere roughing-in of the work goes, I know that little assistance can be obtained from any external source. The wood-carver at least must possess great capacity, and have had extensive practice, to render him expert in all that relates to the preliminary portions of his work. But when the risk and difficulties of the preliminary stages are past, then the advantages of consulting the elaborate examples of the Dutch masters become evident. In all that relates to texture and high finish, the sharp, crisp, and sparkling touch of a Van Aelst, Huysum, or De Heem, will be apt to prompt the carver to the exercise of his highest powers. It was by first consulting Van Aelst's pictures of still-life, to assist me in some carvings on which I was engaged, that my eye became enamoured of their rich and glowing tints, and I was led irresistibly in trifles to try my pencil in that direction.

The Signorina's flattering present revived the desire already lurking in my breast of producing a masterpiece in imitation of the Dutchman. But as it turned out, I was never well pleased with my performance. I had resolved that on its completion I would direct all my energies to my old master's interests. The charm, therefore, which might otherwise have animated my pencil had departed with the first hour of the work. The folds of azure blue and golden embroidery on the silk had lost their grace ; the antique vase, the polished marble, and radiant fruit, looked heavy and tasteless.

Decay, too, set in, and one morning, on looking for the peaches, I found them rotten, as if to foretell the death of my hopes. I had learned that the Signorina already had a lover. I had seen her during the progress of the picture, and words had fallen from her lips which pained me, because I could but regard them as the language of mere friendship. It grieved her, she would say, that I should on her account sit immured in my solitary room. It was the time of gipsy parties, and she sent to give me intimation of one of those pleasant excursions. She and her friends would be there. At the last moment she came to my window in the garden. I caught sight of her, and, judging from her manner that she wished to speak to me, I went out. She had come to implore me to lay aside my work. She would make me promise to join her party, and gave me exact instructions where they would encamp; I could bring paper and pencil and sketch. What could be more pleasant? It was wrong to refuse her. I was looking ill. She would be herself unhappy if she saw me not at the party. I promised her that I would follow her advice; said that I knew the chosen spot where they had arranged to assemble; it was one of my favourite haunts. She might expect me; and I thanked her many times for her solicitude.

While we were thus speaking, she was looking for a flower; and having fixed upon a china rose, which grew up near my window, I hastened to my studio to pluck it. I shall not attempt to describe how lovely she looked as she cast up her eyes after the flower. She wore a simple straw hat; her tiny hand had been compressed into a minute kid glove of a pale lemon tint; while her hair, black as the raven's plumage, hung down in sportive tresses.

Having given her the rose she desired, she was so pleased with it that she gave me further pleasure by asking me for its companion. At the risk of breaking my neck, I plucked the second one pointed out, and then with a laugh and a bound she tripped lightly away. In a few seconds I saw her enter her father's cottage. All the time she had been talking to me another had been waiting for her at the end of the avenue, and the companion rose was for him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE GIPSY PARTY.

WHEN, as a boy, compelled to work myself, I saw those of my own years in the playground happy and boisterous, I felt no envy. When later in life, labouring in the studio of M. Dalby, I saw through the window troops of youths going forth into the fields, with bat, ball, and kite, so far from feeling disappointed that I could not join in their health-giving pastimes,—so far from feeling discontented with my lot,—the smile of satisfaction which lit up the faces of the juvenile throng imparted real joy to my heart. I loved the streets most when they were most silent, when the boisterous element was far away : but I also liked to be conscious that the multitude were bent on happiness. On such holiday occasions I have pointed my crayon with a relish, and set down to my design in a state of mind such as the tired usher feels when the school is closed, and he has before

him a few hours he can really and truly call his own. I tried to revive the old state of blissful serenity when I beheld the joyous Signorina depart for the woods with her equally joyous lover, wearing on their breasts the roses I had plucked from the window of my studio. I gathered all my implements about me, displayed my choicest prints upon the screen, brought out my antique, reached forth my favourite volume. All the old conditions surrounded me, but their enchantment was gone. The Signorina alone remained mistress of my thoughts. Within all was gloomy as the night ; but when I cast my eyes over the landscape a track of sunlight marked the way which the lovers had taken through the meadows and up the hill side.

The poet tells us how the Indian lover rose unconsciously from his sleep, and how ‘ a spirit in his feet ’ led him, ‘ he knew not how,’ unto the window of his mistress. In some such dreamy state of inspired unconciousness I found myself in the fields, in search of the Italian maiden. A rapid walk brought me in sight of the gipsy encampment, where I paused ; passion had carried me thus far, but principle now arrested my steps. I had forsaken a friendless old man, who had befriended me, for one who, possessing youth, beauty, and accomplishments, might command any number of friends and admirers. Besides, was it not clear as the day that the heart I sought was no longer free? Wherefore then my headlong course? I turned down a quiet lane to reflect, and whence I might easily retrace my steps. Merry shouts and peals of laughter came over the meadows. It was a bright day, and many wild flowers still lingered on the warm embankment. The bee, too, was there, busily gathering in

her winter stores. Immovable, I sat watching the tiny insects running to and fro in the grass. A nest of ants lay at my feet, I became interested in their labours, and by degrees the cloud that obscured the summit of my hopes was dispelled, and I could once more think upon the future without despair. I had achieved a position already, and I could yet command respect. Nothing would be denied me if I could but take a lesson from the minute labourers the ants at my feet. I would seek in work the solace of disappointed hopes; I had passed through the fire of experience, not unscathed it might be, but I had only to labour with a purpose. Had I not read how the great artists of old found in work a solace for every ill? Was I not fortunate, indeed, thus to be placed in the very pathway to fortune and distinction? An outcast, a wanderer, I might yet come to hold communion with the immortal few. Soliloquising in this strain, I rose from the ground, and turned, silent and lonely, my way towards home, confident that henceforth I could look on the Signorina with the eye of a Stoic.

The evening was closing in apace. It had been one of those autumn days when sudden storms arise. Suddenly I became conscious of the absence of light in the distant valley and on the woods. Clouds obscured the sun, and I guessed by these appearances that the gay party upon the hill side would take alarm, and soon be upon my track. I was not wrong. The next moment the hum of many voices announced their approach. I stepped hastily aside. The company drew nearer, the lovers among the rest, I cast one look on the Signorina as she passed. On that instant a sunbeam burst through

the trees, and fell upon the group: and the same ray which lit up the face of the Italian girl, as in the pride of youth and beauty she leaned on the arm of her lover, also threw the shadow of a stooping, decrepid old man upon an embankment of white loam near where I stood. It was the shadow of the old carver. He had wandered forth in search of his only friend, and found him true. Principle had triumphed over Passion.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE OLD CARVER'S LAST WORK.

DAY by day the venerable carver stood more and more in need of those attentions due from youth to old age, but which—alas! for human nature—youth too often fails to render. Never was a more beautiful thought chiselled in stone than the group by Canova, of ‘Beneficence leading an Old Man to the Tomb.’ Stricken with years, the patriarch leans on the arms of a young girl, in whose face patience, tenderness, and solicitude are strongly impressed. She walks slowly and softly, as if to accommodate the tottering movements of her decrepid charge, while her eyes are bent upon the ground, as if to choose the smoothest pathway. The mute eloquence of this simple allegory goes direct to the heart; and who does not confess the force of that appeal, indicating so gracefully, and yet so touchingly, the duties of the young and buoyant to the infirm and old? Among others, a cast of this work of Canova’s stood in our garden, having

been originally purchased by Bezza for casting. I know not that I needed the instant presence of example to direct me in my duty to the old carver; but I was nevertheless grateful to the sculptor for his beautiful and impressive lesson.

Of late my master had devoted himself almost wholly to the completion of a monumental design in remembrance of his wife and child. He had made a great secret of this work: it was not until warned of his near end that he communicated even to myself his intention of at once placing his last great effort in the chancel of St. Margaret's Church. He had so arranged it that only his own name would be required to make the design complete, and this trifling but delicate task he confided to his pupil. 'When I am gone,' said he, in an unfaltering voice, 'go, unseen, into the Church of St. Margaret, and, with the same chisel I myself employed, cut deeply my name upon the vacant space which I have left on my monument to receive it.'

The memorial itself was worthy of the greatest of sculptors—it was unique alike in conception and execution. While it displayed the characteristic tendency of its designer's mind, after the finer and more elaborate examples of the mediæval times, it also placed beyond a doubt the fact that he was no slave to the mannerisms of the dark age. He had gone direct to nature for the materials—the heart alone inspired the idea. In an attitude of mourning, his long lean hands half buried in his dishevelled locks, sat the figure of the bereaved sculptor, in his ordinary working dress—while by his side were strewed the mallet, chisel, and other tools which had been used in engraving the names of mother and

child upon an upright slab. The charm of the design rested chiefly in the mound or grave, on which in an apparently natural order the artist had sculptured almost every wild flower to be found in meadow and lane. It was just as if village children had gone forth and plucked whole lapfuls of daffodils, blue bells, cowslips and primroses, and, having thrown them upon the grave, a miracle had turned them into marble. Thus had the sculptor, regardless of toil, lingered over the shrine of his affections—year after year exhausting spring, summer, and autumn of their beauties, from the first snowdrop even to the last dry leaf. The slenderest stalk, the smallest flower, and the tiniest blade of grass were rendered with the extremest finish. Here and there, just as if the winds had so arranged it, were little clefts and hollows formed by dry, mossgrown sticks, so as to impart a lightness to the overhanging flowers: and ever and anon the eye of the observer might detect some more fragile bud and blossom protected beneath the shadow of the huge burdock. And yet with all this variety and profusion there was little appearance of labour or care. The whole seemed like the creation of an hour. It had been the task of many happy intervals, extending over a period of ten years. The dying artist was very proud of this monument, and grew very anxious to see it in its place. There was little difficulty in the way. A fine light space in the side aisle was at once accorded to it, and in a few days, and almost unseen by one of the parishioners, the cherished tribute of genius and affection was securely imbedded in its place. From that hour the ancient carver never more touched mallet or chisel. It seemed a great relief to him that his memorial was at last in its

place. He became more cheerful, but, as if for very lack of using them, his eyes grew dim, and by-and-by he lost his sight altogether. Notwithstanding, his heart and hopes remained fresh and sound as of yore, and he still continued to dilate on the wonderful restorations he had made, and of the great conflicts he had sustained against the false classicists.

It was his fancy to stand or sit in the sun, leaning against the hollow trunk of a leafless pollard oak, that stood in the hedgerow of the garden. While I was busy in the studio, he would go noiselessly out of the house, and grope his way to his favourite haunt, and there, leaning upon his staff, he would seem to gaze up towards the sun, and intently listen to the larks which rose up from the neighbouring fields. At length he took to his chamber; but, whether in his garden or his room, he talked of nothing save his restorations, and of his indefatigable efforts to stave off inundations of stucco and plaster. His wants were very few, for in his last days he only asked for water and sunlight. I made sad havoc with the ivy, in order to let the sunbeams into his room. At last he grew deaf, and could no longer derive pleasure from the music of the larks. This of course only led him to talk the more: and totally and happily oblivious of the sad confusion into which his pecuniary affairs had fallen, he would tell me how that I was to consider his stock-in-trade, his mallets, chisels, drawings, models, and fragments of wood and stone carvings, all as my own—for that I was indeed his son. I thanked him over and over again, although I knew that certain creditors were waiting, wolf-like, at the door, to sweep off the entire establishment the moment the poor old man was con-

veyed to his last home. One morning, to my own great grief and to the satisfaction of the said creditors, we carried the old man, by the little porch, towards the churchyard. The door of the little porch was closed by stranger's hands. I never afterwards saw the interior of the quaint old dwelling. I understood that the relics sold for a trifle, and in a few months a fine villa residence occupied the site of the old carver's cottage.

Thus lived and died the last of the old school of carvers. He was one of the few whose integrity manifested itself in small things as well as great. I have known him decline a commission rather than employ a material in the smallest way unfitted for the purpose in view. For instance, if the timber at his command had not been tested by the weather for a specified number of seasons, no persuasion would induce him to use it. He would wait until the proper wood, or stone, as the case might be, could be procured : so that, what with the period consumed in taking precautionary measures and the time devoted to imparting the most scrupulous finish to everything, it was no wonder that the rising generation grew impatient, and took up with new modes more in keeping with the impetuous and shallow character of the new age. It but ill suited the temper of your moderns to wait the old carver's time.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE GARDENER AND HIS PRINTS.

AFTER I had quietly settled down with the old carver in the museum of antiquities, my aunt as quietly betook herself off to her native village, quite satisfied with the part she had played towards myself, and equally convinced that another winter spent in the vegetable market, exposed to all weathers, would be the death of her. On the breaking up of the carver's establishment, therefore, I, in common with the rest of his staff, had to find a new home.

Among our few intimates was a gardener, a sort of half woodman, who lived in a cottage in the suburbs, and got a livelihood chiefly by attending to some shrubberies, walks, and plantations, without the city, belonging to one of the university foundations. He was a man of some taste in his calling; and of this taste my master had for many years availed himself. Few gardens were arranged with nicer feeling and effect than the old carver's. The gardener's family were all grown up and married off, so that he was able to spare me two rooms in his cottage, and for the same reason the dame, his partner, found leisure to dress my meals and wait upon me. The cottage, like its occupants, was of a very plain description. Yet it was pleasant at least in summer, for the tenant had enclosed it with a double row of willow stakes, which as designed had taken root, and, being constantly trimmed, had become a wall of fresh leaves. Within the little front enclosure the owner cultivated

flowers, at the rear of the cottage grew vegetables for home use. Here for a time I lived in quiet, mourning my loss, and wondering, half bewildered, what I should do. I had fallen in with the carver's habits so effectually that, like him, I had become almost helpless to battle with the world. My early experience hardly served me. In fact I had become an art student, with a slender purse and no lack of cares. I had shared the fortunes of a poor man. My wealth lay chiefly in my youth and skill. I was, however, enabled to fit up my sitting room as a studio. I had panels, colours, brushes, an easel, engravings, and books, together with a great number of tools used in wood and stone carving. All these I arranged in my room in proper order, and sat down to reflect. Much solitude had made me reflective. For several days I did nothing else.

My landlord, who had imbibed some little of my old master's love for curiosities, had in the course of years picked up at sales and elsewhere some queer specimens of furniture, china, and a few engravings. Among the prints were two after Gainsborough. One representing cows and horses assembled in a group on the border of a wood, with a rustic fellow lying asleep with his face half buried in the grass. The other was from the celebrated painting by the same master of a country girl with a pitcher. I had long envied the gardener the possession of these two prints. They were very fine impressions ; I was not alone in my desire to possess them. A near neighbour, a money-lender, well known to the undergraduates of the university, had also set his eyes upon them with envy, and was determined to have them at any price. He had seen them only a short time pre-

vious to my taking the room in which they hung, and he seldom passed the wicket without looking in to inquire whether the gardener had come to any decision. He was a pertinacious fellow, who thought that money would do anything, and he was not far wrong. Eventually he came with the money in his hand. He had increased his offer from a crown to one pound five shillings, and this sum, being displayed in small change, seemed a fortune in the eyes of the indigent gardener, who, however, still refused to part with his prints, notwithstanding that it was his object to make a provision for old age.

‘The room will look nothing without them,’ said he.

‘You cannot eat them,’ said the money-lender.

‘They do my eyes good,’ replied my landlord.

‘But you don’t eat with your eyes.’

‘That’s true ; but somehow I want things to look at. Somehow I don’t want to part with that picture of the girl with the little dog and the pitcher. I picked her up at a sale, and I might never be able to pick up another so cheap. She is but a picture, yet she seems to be one of the family almost. She does look so like a sister of mine that died when I was a child, long ago. She has just the same pretty sulky look, and when I used to plague her, poor girl, she would drop her pretty under lip, just like that. She never went to the spring for water without taking her dog with her. It was a shepherd dog’s pup. Father was a shepherd on the Wolds a long way from market town. God bless me, she went without shoes without thinking it strange. Polly had beautiful feet, just like those in the picture. I tell you what, sir, I won’t part with her, and there’s an end of it.’

Such were the kind of meetings which now and then

took place between the cotter and the man of loans respecting the engravings which hung in my studio. At length the thing became serious. The money lender, who was far from entering into the feelings of the gardener, could barely hide his ill temper on being thus baffled in his object. His looks betrayed his evil nature. He had ruined many in his time.

The gardener's wife, with a woman's shrewdness, remarked that 'she did not like his eyes.' This was when he had left, after the gardener had revived the reminiscence of his boyish home on the Wolds.

'I am afraid he means thee no good,' said the wife.

'Maybe not,' replied the husband; 'but yet,' he continued, 'I hardly see how he can harm me, I never borrowed of him.'

'He may get some other gardener to do up his place,' rejoined the apprehensive wife.

'Let him do his worst; but I'll be hanged outright before I part with my prints,' was the gardener's answer.

'Curse the pictures,' ejaculated the woman, 'I wish they had never come into the house.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE MONEY-LENDER'S SCHEME.

I OFTEN sat looking at the two engravings after the great stir which they had occasioned. The 'Girl with the Pitcher' appeared more touching and irresistible than ever, after what the gardener had said about it. It is

the mastery of art so to impress the beholder. I was hardly less struck with the wood scene, with the groups of cows and horses, and the herdsman sleeping in the grass. Its solitary spirit infected me. I, too, in my boyhood had known such scenes, and lived in them; I might say revelled in them. Gainsborough painted solitude better, truer, than any other artist I have studied. One familiar with rural life, where cottages mingle their roofs with the verdure of the forest, will have noted a slow dreamy way peculiar to retired cotters. When, returned from toil in the field, they sit at the door, or, at early dawn, when they come forth to greet the sun, how vacant they look! How little they resemble ordinary pictures of rustic life! If you want to see portrayed the perfect character of rusticity, you must needs go to Gainsborough. If you want the air of true gentility, go to Gainsborough; nay, if you look for dignity, you may pass by this master and fare worse. There is truth, delicacy, sensibility, and pathos in everything that he touched.

I would have copied the two prints, and so brought matters between the gardener and the money-lender to a settlement. I made several attempts to imitate the expression of the rustic girl's face, in vain. Those who buy copies of Gainsborough's works for originals are easily cheated. I have seen scores make the attempt to copy his graces without success. In one instance alone do I remember anything like an approximation to success, and that was in the case of an artist of great distinction, a great lover of Gainsborough. Even in this case the rose tinge upon the cheeks of the original portrait lost half its spring-like freshness in the process of

being transferred to another canvas. In making the attempt myself to copy, I expected to be able to succeed only so far as to satisfy my landlord with the copies, that he might be induced to part with the engravings; but when I showed him my best efforts, he only smiled. He wanted the money the engravings would bring, and he would like to please, or rather not to offend, his rich neighbour and customer; but he would not part with his art treasures.

Time went on and the affair was well-nigh forgotten. The money-lender never once referred to the prints. He often came to the cottage with small orders or to give instructions about his flower garden, and appeared so friendly and carried on his intercourse in so natural a manner that even the acuteness of the dame, my landlady herself, was at fault. As the gardener advanced in years, he found the labours of gardening too much for his strength. He often expressed a wish to possess a pony and cart for the removal of gravel or manure, to lighten his own labour and save the expense of cartage, and furthermore to enable him to take his good wife on an occasional visit to a married daughter who lived in a neighbouring hamlet. This wish of my landlord was often expressed, and got to be generally known; yet no one seemed likely to settle the difficulty as to how the money was to be got. My own purse was too low to enable me to advance a sum from eight pounds to ten pounds. We often, when sitting at the door or window, saw pony carts go past, and as often the subject was revived, until at last hardly anything else was talked about. The money-lender's house was built in a green close or paddock nearly opposite, so that we could over-

look it from our bedroom windows. Our prosperous neighbour had every convenience in the shape of out-houses and stable for the accommodation of domestic animals : but his taste lay not in that direction. He kept one ferocious dog to guard his property, and no more. Horses and dogs, he used to say, 'ate their heads off,' and he would have nothing to do with them. We were not a little astonished, therefore, one morning to observe a sturdy pony grazing in our neighbour's close, and, moreover, very plainly to be seen under a shed was a cart to match. The morning following the money-lender stopped at the cottage as usual to order some cauliflowers for his dinner, but made no allusion to his new acquisition. He had not, however, been gone many minutes, when he came running back, saying that 'he had forgotten what he had chiefly called about,' which was to ask the gardener, my landlord, to take charge of the pony, as the boy whom he kept in the house was unused to animals. The request was readily acceded to ; a second time the pony's master returned, and on this occasion to say that, 'as animals ate their heads off unless they were made to work, the gardener if he had any gravel or manure to cart, or in fact any other job, the pony was at his service. Perhaps,' he added, 'as it is near quarter-day, there might be furniture to remove here and there.' Again, for the third time, our neighbour returned to the cottage door, saying, 'By the bye, I have heard that you have friends a few miles off in the country. If you would like to pay them a visit on Sunday or week day, it is all one to me—the better the day the better the deed—the pony and cart are at your service always. Of course,' he added as he walked on,

‘I shall expect that you will make no charge for attendance on the animal.’

All this was spoken so fairly that no one in the cottage would have suspected an evil intention lurking beneath so many smooth words, had it not happened that the old dame caught another glance of the pony-owner’s eyes, who must needs satisfy his curiosity as to the effect which his last offer had made on the gardener. That look had something in it so sinister that when the money-lender was gone, the dame exclaimed :

‘I tell thee what, thou shalt have nothing to do with that man, nor his pony, nor his cart, nor anything belonging to him.’

‘I, too, tell you what, wife,’ replied the husband, ‘if you go on at that rate I shall have to pack you off to the Bartle Asylum. Why, woman, what harm can he mean me?’

‘Don’t *woman* me,’ retorted the dame, ‘for I won’t have it. I’ll lay my life on’t that your friend the money-lender will bring us all to the workhouse before the year’s out, and you are Simple Simon enough to buy his pony cart on trust.’

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE PREDICTION OF THE GARDENER’S WIFE PROVES TRUE.

WITHIN a week after the wife’s prediction, and without consulting anyone, the gardener became the owner of the pony and cart, on the condition that he paid for them

by weekly instalments. He had, however, forgotten in making the arrangement that it was just on the approach of winter, when gardeners are usually frozen out. True, he had his weekly wages to receive from the head gardener of the college owning the suburban plantation and shrubberies : but this was a trifle—none too much to fill the cupboard and pay rent. Therefore it came about that the expenses of keeping the pony and paying for it weekly soon drove the gardener into difficulties and arrears with small tradespeople. At first the money-lender did not ask for the Gainsborough prints outright ; he merely begged for the loan of them. He then fancied the china, and some of the better articles of furniture, until in the course of the winter he almost emptied the cottage parlour of its most valued contents, and always under the plea that he would return them when the gardener had settled with other creditors. He only took them, he said in a friendly sort of way, in order to prevent other creditors from making free with them. To make matters worse, the poor gardener, almost beside himself, in order to mitigate his anxiety, took to frequenting a neighbouring alehouse, where cards were not forbidden, and, by combining gambling with drinking, completed the work of ruin so ably commenced by the money-lender. In one of his drinking bouts, which usually lasted several days, he raffled off the pony and cart for about five pounds, being that amount less than the price he had agreed to pay for them. With this sum he thought to pay up arrears of weekly instalments, and to settle all by the loss of the money he had already paid, and so get back his property in pledge. The usurer received the money, but delayed returning any of the

goods, making many plausible excuses for his conduct, which by degrees enraged the gardener beyond bounds. Hitherto he had kept his affairs pretty well to himself, but now he grew excited and feverish and took to his bed. Never was poor wretch more utterly powerless to right himself. Luckily the doctor called in was related to the Archdeacon St. John, one of the old carver's patrons, recently mentioned by me. When the doctor had seen and prescribed for his patient, he came into the parlour to consult with the dame. 'Something has occurred,' he observed, 'to bring about this illness of your husband, and, if it is no very grave secret, I should like to know what it is ;' and he proceeded, looking on the now blank wall over the fireplace, 'What have you done with the Gainsborough prints I used to admire so much ?'

'That's it,' replied the wife, wiping her eyes ; 'those pictures were the cause of all our troubles ;' and thereupon she told the whole story of her husband's dealings with the ensnaring money-lender in the most circumstantial manner, laying great stress on her own forethought and wise prediction. The doctor listened patiently—made notes of points of interest, and took his leave. How he proceeded to act none of us knew, but in three days from that time every article of furniture, china, and pictures, including the Gainsborough prints, found their way to the places they formerly occupied. All the explanation we ever had on the subject was that the doctor had stated the case to his uncle ; and the Archdeacon was an influential personage of whom the money-lender stood in awe and dread, on account of some malpractices of which he had been guilty in certain dealings with some undergraduates. The cause of the

gardener's illness being thus removed, he recovered, and went to and fro to the different shrubberies and plantations as before, and grew day by day more and more attached to the Gainsboroughs which he had been so near losing.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HIS LORDSHIP'S PORTER.

DURING the winter I did little besides make what appeared to be fruitless experiments. When, however, spring came, I went sketching in the fields, as I had often done in company with my drawing-master, M. Dalby, whose style I tried hard to imitate, and failed; whose ill-fortune I equally endeavoured to avoid, but without success. My pounds became pence: and then I remember that the May mornings seemed less bright and balmy. The fields put on a sunless, gloomy aspect when the last shilling was gone. Spring is a bad season for the wayfarer. In autumn he may find nuts, berries, crab-apples, acorns, hips and haws, and all manner of sustenance in the wild woods; but in spring the fertile-looking fields and forests are to the hungry as profitless as the barren heath. One morning, in hopeless plight I chanced to stray into the vicinity of a nobleman's palace, the Gothic chapel of which had engaged me and my old master some eighteen months in its restoration. It was when his lordship took possession of his estates at his father's death. I was reminded that I might still find a friend within this abode of opulence and refinement, in

the person of an ancient steward of the household, whose acquaintance I had made during our labours in the chapel. Having learned at the lodge, however, that the steward had died during the previous winter, I was about to retire, when the little pompous porter, who was seated outside his door, in an antique chair, basking in the sun, opened his small lizard-like eyes (he had answered my inquiry without putting himself to that trouble), and interrogated first himself and then his visitor before him, thus :

‘ I fancy I know that face ? ’

‘ Indeed, sir ? ’

‘ Prentice of the old carver, as did up the chapel ! ’

‘ The very same. ’

‘ Take a seat. ’

‘ Thank you. ’

‘ Where have you been so long ? What’s become of the old carver ? Glad to see you. Old carver dead, eh ? Sorry to hear it. What are you doing now ? Turned painter ? Was thinking about you—was saying I should like to have a little talk with you. Remember, you used to have a genius for drawing ; said to Jane, only the other day, if I could meet with the old carver’s lad, I’d get him to sketch my picture. Fine chair, this, always had a fancy for this chair. Belonged to a lady in the village. Bought it at her sale. I’ve got a few old paintings. Walk in. You see that with the hole in it—it’s reckoned good. Can’t think of the master’s name. Get my Pilkington’s “ Dictionary of Painters,” Jane. Let me see ! begins with—ah, well, we’ll attend to that presently. What I want to see you about more particularly is my *own* picture. What have you got in the folio ? Sketches ? Now, what would be about the figure for a whole length ?

Jane thinks I ought to have my portrait whole length, and I think so too. Been very fortunate. Was only under-butler when the chapel was done up. You remember. Mine's a curious history. Ought to be printed. Seven of us, all boys, bred to the plough; might have been no better all my days but for a very fortunate accident. It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, as they say. The squire had a son who was badly afflicted, and, in consequence, required some one to keep an eye upon him, wherever he went. Well, the squire tried several lads about, without finding one he could trust. The young squire was constantly falling into some trouble or another, tumbling into a ditch, or over a stile. Well, at last the squire tried me, and from that day the lad began to mend apace, and in the end got quite rid of his ailment, and my services were no longer required. I was just thinking of returning to the plough-tail, when I was sent for to the Manor House, where the squire and his lady received me as if I had been one of the family. They had me into the parlour, just as I was, in my hob-nail boots, all on a Turkish carpet, as soft as a feather-bed. Fancy, I had to go right up to the fire-place, and drink the squire's health. "And now," says the squire to me, "Samuel," says he, "what can we do for you?" Of course I hardly knew what to say. "We have been thinking," says he, "of recommending you to my lord as a very proper person to fill a vacancy which is open in his buttery. Would you like to be my lord's under-butler, Samuel?" Of course I need not tell you what answer I gave the squire. I took the place, and for seven years I cleaned the knives, forks, boots, shoes, and plate, three hundred and twenty pieces of plate in all, and never lost a bit, not so

much as a tea-spoon, and never heard a word of complaint, which of course was very flattering to me, and very much to my credit. Well, that makes the second period of my life. First the ploughboy, and then the under-butler. The young squire grew up and went to college with his present lordship, and they are about as decent a couple of fellows as you would find in a day's march. Time came when the young squire had it in his power to do me a service, and, without my asking, he used his influence with my lord, and pushed me into the lodge here, which is something like an appointment ; and here I am with my wife and two children, about as well satisfied with myself and things in general as any man could well be.'

It had been a less infliction to paint the loquacious porter's portrait, gratis, than to have been thus condemned to listen to his ceaseless and discursive story ; but the reduced state of my commissariat induced me to endure it.

'I was born fortunate,' recommenced the self-complaisant occupant of the arm-chair. 'Everything I have tried has turned out well. I bought this carved chair for next to nothing. My small collection of paintings, which I am told is worth the house which holds them, only cost me 7*l.*15*s.* I joined the Horticultural Society, and, without putting a spade in the ground, got several prizes. There's no such children as mine in these parts ; and, though I say it, a better sort of woman than my wife never broke bread. I think, after what I have told you, you will admit I might venture to sit for my portrait.'

'Certainly,' I replied ; and I should have agreed with him on that point without his autobiographic preamble,

But he astonished me by drawing upon his smattering acquaintance with pictures, to suggest a few accessories to his portrait, in which prodigal taste he was, perhaps, not so singular as unreasonable.

‘Well then,’ he remarked, ‘now comes the question as to the style in which the thing ought to be done. If it makes no difference in the charge, I should like to be painted sitting in the old chair, just beside the pillar of the gateway, and with the first quadrangle seen in the background, and through the second archway a glimpse of the park, and just a sprinkling of deer under the oak trees in the distance. I’ve been looking at a picture of Vandyke’s in the library, and I find that you could venture to bring in a curtain hanging down the pillar, and likewise a table with ornamental cover; and if it would not be much more expensive, I’ve a fine bronze inkstand, which would stand upon the table, quite in character with the chair. Perhaps you would be able to put in a few letters, with one in my hand, and a few pens? The post letters all pass through my hands. Then what do you say to introducing the medals of the Horticultural Society, in the morocco case, together with the various prize-flowers, hollyhocks, and roses of various colours, with the vases in which they were sent to the show? I thought at one time of your throwing in a few pieces of his lordship’s plate, just to remind people of the fact of my having had charge of it for seven years, without losing so much as a tea-spoon, and—but that I leave to your superior taste. I don’t know how you may be situated, but if it would be worth your while to take the job, I shan’t be nice to a few shillings, you can have something in advance. I’ll get you permission to his

lordship's gallery, where you can make as many copies as you like ; and I expect, if you make a good thing of my picture, you will get half the village to paint. But you must do mine cheap for a beginning. What do you say to fifteen shillings, with half the money down at starting ?

Of course I felt highly honoured by the liberal proposition of the illustrious gate-keeper ; at the same time I did not immediately close with his offer, preferring, for reasons which suggested themselves, to think the matter over for a day or two. The self-conscious Samuel had, unwittingly, put a thought into my head for which I felt rather inclined to think well of him, in spite of his meanness and conceit. On returning home, I thought it best to address myself a letter to his master, requesting permission to study in his gallery. Strange that the idea had never struck me before. It was in this very collection I had formerly studied the two pictures I have referred to by Van Aelst. The place was literally crowded with gems of the highest value. In my letter, I recalled to the noble owner's recollection my former services in restoring the Gothic chapel, and briefly remarked how that the death of my master and the decline of the Gothic taste had led me to a change of profession, and begged that he would permit me to copy a few of the smaller works in his cabinet, with the view of improving my hand, and at the same time my finances. The effect of my letter was most unexpectedly cheering. Before I had well set to work in my studio on the following day, a little pony drew up at my door, and a country lad who was employed as messenger at the palace delivered a letter into my hands, giving me access

at all times to his lordship's pictures, and permission to copy any number of the same, family portraits excepted. His lordship was further good enough to say that in the course of a month he would be leaving for the continent, but that he had arranged with Mr. R——, the famous restorer, to clean and restore such of his pictures as were thought to need it, and that, if his influence and introduction to the said Mr. R—— would be of any service to me in the way of procuring employment, he should be only too happy to serve me. This was the very opportunity of all others I most desired.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MADAME MITCHEL'S.

NOT long after my interview with the ambitious porter at the lodge gate, I chanced to stroll into the park, pondering by the way on the state of my finances, which had become critical in the extreme, when I accidentally came upon a gay group assembled near the ornamental water, and at once recognised the youth whom I had known as Laura Bezza's lover sitting conspicuously among the party, beside a wealthy heiress, the daughter of a tradesman in the city. My thoughts at once reverted to the Italian girl. I was surprised not to find her one of the party. A blush passed over the face of the youth as his glance met mine, and on that instant it occurred to me that there was something meant by that expression of shame. Suddenly, my theme was changed,

and all my old thoughts of Laura returned, so that her image haunted me henceforth. Had he forsaken her? Had her poverty chilled his ardour? The breaking up of the old carver's establishment had proved as fatal to the Signor as to myself. I could not account for the absence of the daughter, nor reconcile what I saw. Hitherto it had been some consolation to me to believe that at least the Signorina—she seemed but a child at that time—was beloved by one who had the means to protect her from the cares of poverty. I had lost sight of her since my master's death, but had not forgotten—that were impossible—the bright vision of the garden, and the roses I had plucked from my window on that eventful sunny autumn morning. I resolved that I would not sleep until I had satisfied myself of the fate of the Italian maiden.

In almost every city in England there is some one particular house where foreigners specially congregate. The poorer sort of Italians, Germans, and Hebrews will favour some one tavern, where they can meet to transact business, cook their humble meals, and, after a day of toil, rest themselves in peace. When once a lodging-house of this description is established, it becomes known in every part of Europe, and is sure of success. Economy, strict economy, must be the order of an establishment where wandering Jew pedlars are the chief patrons. Madame Mitchel's was a house of this kind: and she, being a woman of feeling and of honour, was much respected by the Babylonish throng which nightly assembled in her large dingy parlour. Weary and worn long-bearded men came in at dusk. Among others there was 'Old Jacobs,' who dealt in precious stones, spectacles,

and black lead pencils. He had used the house for half a century. Then there was 'Lame Lazarus,' who bought paintings and carvings: and I particularly call to mind a venerable widow Jewess. In fact, the majority were poor-looking Hebrews who dealt in every conceivable commodity. Added to this class were some Italians who made plaster figures. These last were more settled in their habits, and would live for many years in the same rooms. When a child, I lived near to this 'house of call,' and I remember that the long beards and haggard faces of some of the patriarchal wanderers created no small alarm in the juvenile ranks of the locality; but when I saw that they were gentle and harmless, I was filled with respectful curiosity, and I would stand and watch them prepare their fish at the cistern near the stable up the court, or as they passed to and fro, in the dim light of the evening, more like denizens of another world than inhabitants of this. My career had all along been more or less associated with this dirty old tavern. M. Dalby had once or twice sent me there for casts, and the old carver had kept up a constant connection with the dealers who called there periodically with their relics of the past. And yet out of a population of thirty thousand, perhaps not five hundred of the inhabitants had seen or heard of the dingy 'house of call,' in its retired 'no thoroughfare.' I went instinctively to this comfortless habitation in search of Bezza and his daughter. Long known to the respected landlady, I walked boldly into her little bar and inquired if the Bezzas were at home, assuming that they lived there, for fear of denial.

'One moment ago,' replied the landlady, 'the poor

girl Laura was seated beside me here in this little room. The Signor, as usual, is gambling with old Campiani, his countryman, up-stairs. Sometimes he wins, and sometimes he loses; luck has gone against him lately. He works for Campiani in the modelling line: but it happens frequently that he has played away all the money due for his work before his model is finished, and so he goes on. It is a sad life for a young girl to lead.'

'What does Laura all the time?'

'Works like a slave, cleaning moulds and scraping off the seams of the plaster figures after they are cast. I saw her fingers were bleeding to-night, as she sat in that chair in which you are now sitting, with constant handling of the files, glass paper, and Dutch rush, as they call it. She does bronzing occasionally, but the verdigris is too powerful for her. I knew her mother, just such another beauty as little Laura. She died in my own arms, poor soul. Well, you see, I'm a sort of mother to these people. They keep me poor. Very few of them pay up. They would if they could; but I tell you, if it was not for the little Laura, the Signor would very soon budge from the "Brown Bear," that he would.'

'Could I speak with Laura a moment?'

'Certainly; you are a great favourite; she told me so. Do you know that picture?'

True enough—there was my poor imitation of Van Aelst.

'She prizes that picture,' continued the landlady, 'above all things. That's why it's in my place. She did not say as much, but I know she feels that it is safer here than in her own room. You know what I mean.

The Signor will play away the coat off his back when the fit is on. When did you see Laura last ?'

'I have not seen her for months. I thought she was to be married to the son of the rich mercer on the Mount.'

'Ah, the villain ! The moment he found she was poor he left her ; and he was not content with that, but he must needs insult her on account of her father's faults. But that gave her small concern, and I know why. She had never absolutely promised her heart to the pitiful fellow, and for very good reasons. Perhaps she was wrong in so far that she did not absolutely discourage him.'

'Did she love another ?'

'Do you love Laura yourself ? Come, answer me that.'

'That is certainly an answer for other ears,' I replied, blushing at being thus abruptly interrogated ; but Madame Mitchel was too much the mother of her guest to stand on ceremony.

'Would you reject her because she is poor, or because her father is not what we could wish him ?'

'I certainly should love her a thousand times more for her troubles.'

'Come along, you shall see her and tell her so. But stop, you are so great a stranger, I will just see her myself first, and ask permission, for she is a fiery little creature, and might be offended with us both.'

So saying the kind-hearted woman disappeared along a dark passage, whither my eyes followed her, and a door opening displayed a lighted room, hung about with casts, and there in the midst stood the charming Laura, wan

and motionless as the figure of Diana on which she was at work. Disregarding the good landlady's presence and precautionary measures, in an instant I stood by the side of the beautiful girl. We said but little, but that little was enough to satisfy Madame Mitchel that her 'two favourites' had been too long parted.

From that hour I became devoted to the 'classics,' of which old Campiani had an endless assortment. I spent my evenings assisting Laura with her work ; in other words, I did Laura's work, which to me was nothing difficult, having a good knowledge of modelling, moulding, and casting. The Signor was delighted beyond measure with me ; so much so that he actually began to reform apace, and became more attached to his profession. In one respect I had formed an unfair estimate of his worth. He was a much greater artist than the old carver had been willing to allow. His statuettes had an elegance quite rare, and I derived great improvement from the critical reflections in which the Signor frequently indulged upon various sculptors, ancient and modern. Campiani's stock included many casts from original antique fragments, which happened to be fine early impressions, and thus, for the purposes of illustration, were hardly inferior to the sculptures from which they were taken. In this respect, sculpture has the advantage over painting. The most delicate chiselwork can be moulded and cast, and so multiplied ; while, on the contrary, the finest copy of a masterpiece in paint can never approximate very closely to the spirit of the original. The copy will be more or less tame, in consequence of the process of copying. Even copies by the greatest masters, those which are remarkable for freedom of handling—such, for

instance, as those Rubens made in his travels in Italy—may be easily detected. Copies by Rubens may be known by their forced freedom, amounting to caricature, and are hardly to be preferred to more laboured imitations by inferior hands. Sitting among our remains of the Athenian chisel, the Signor, in his happier moments, would quietly insist upon the superiority of the ancients over the moderns, and point out with his modelling stick the precise features in which that superiority consisted. Raphael, he would say, came nearest in design to the highest examples of the Athenian sculptures, but that even Raphael wanted the fair proportions, unaffected energy, and elegant contour of the more ancient masters. He cited, in support of this assertion, a fragment of the frieze of the Parthenon, and the remains of a Venus. In the frieze, and more especially in the contours of the horses; the sculptor ‘had strictly adhered to nature in her finest forms.’ In their mutilated state even it was possible to trace the most accurate knowledge of anatomy. The attitudes were never constrained; while the details—the flesh, veins, and integuments—were indicated with the nicest discrimination. Nothing in the works of the Italian school, he persisted in saying, came near in loveliness to ‘Niobe’s lovely Daughter.’ This was going far when we reflect upon the womanly graces of the Madonnas of Raphael; and ‘it is certain,’ the Signor would further insist, ‘that the Belvedere Apollo,

‘As in graceful act he stands,
His arm uplifted with the extended bow,’

reigns supreme over all.

It seldom happens that men commence life with the

design of becoming connoisseurs. Men of fortune, in most cases, come to be possessed of pictures through accidental circumstances ; and it is an equally contingent circumstance if they happen to understand or care anything about them. The wealthy collector associates with men of his own class, who, like himself, are the fortunate owners of works of genius ; and thus, by degrees, he obtains a smattering of art-knowledge, so as to be able to enjoy the wonders of the pencil and chisel which adorn the walls and corridors of his mansion. But a very much closer acquaintance with the *modus operandi* of the artist is essential when the purchase of pictures and statues is in contemplation ; and if the man of wealth would hope to succeed in his fine-art speculations, he would do well to frequent the studios of the best painters and sculptors. One reason why the great painters and sculptors of old were great was in consequence of the close intimacy which existed between the artist and his patrons, as in the case of Lorenzo de Medici, who set the example of making his palace at once a school of learning and a school of arts. Painters, sculptors, and men of genius, were, in fact, 'the court' there. It was the same with the ancients. 'The statuary of Greece,' as Daniel Webb observes, 'were not mere mechanics. Men of education and literature, they were more the companions than servants of their employers ; their taste was refined by the conversation of courts, and enlarged by the lectures of their poets.' In the present day such happy unions rarely exist. The artist's life is, commonly, one long struggle. He is worn out before the friendly hand is held out to him. It is owing to the paucity of real connoisseurs that he dissi-

pates his genius and his strength on unworthy, but indispensable, speculations. He who would live to study must study to live, and this necessity is fatal to the experimental discursiveness of genius, which requires opulence of opportunity. Some have asserted that 'we are all born judges of art'; but I should say that so far from this being true, there are, on the contrary, thousands of people whom no opportunities will make judges of art. They may see all the galleries in the world, and visit every studio, and never rise beyond the point of being 'well informed.' Yes, the gift of connoisseurship no less requires opportunities of cultivation, leisure, experience, and devotion; hence the closer union of the patron and the artist would be to the interest of both.

CHAPTER XL.

THE PICTURE RESTORER.

OPIE, the Royal Academician, when lecturing at the Academy, addressed some very pertinent remarks to such of his youthful audience who, he suspected, might unhappily have enrolled themselves as art-students without possessing the requisite capacity. He warned them against taking up the pencil with the view of escaping the drudgery of the counting-house. He pictured to them the misery and degradation which would be consequent upon failure. He advised the young man to whom his observations might apply to avoid the Academy as he would 'a pestilence,' or he might come to skulk

through life as a hackney-likeness taker, a copier, a drawing master, or pattern drawer to young ladies ; or he even might be driven to 'turn *picture-cleaner*,' and help Time to destroy excellences which he could not rival. I read and pondered much over this frank and very practical piece of advice, when it happened that I was selected (upon his lordship's recommendation) to aid the London restorer in cleaning the pictures at the palace. Having heard but indifferent accounts of picture-restorers in general, I was agreeably surprised to find my new master an artist of great abilities, devoting his life to the renovation of damaged pictures with the same earnestness that the old carver had displayed in the restoration of dilapidated churches. Considering the vast number of fine pictures which proceeded from the pencils of the sublime old masters, it must at once be evident either that pictures possess immortal juvenescence or picture restorers are indispensable. The active creative artist is not over given to trouble himself with the works of the old painters ; he commonly concerns himself with them only in so far as he may profit by their contemplation. The restorer, on the contrary, should be one who, possessing art-knowledge, artistic skill, and genuine love of art, is willing to sacrifice all prospects, fame, and honour as an original artist, to perpetuate the fame of the great dead. With my new employer the restoration and conservation of pictures was a mission. He stood in precisely the same relationship to the old painters as the Gothic carver had stood to the mediæval sculptors. His hand was guided by principle, and his heart and soul were in the work he undertook. The various styles of painting were as familiar to him as

the features of his daily acquaintances. It was interesting to hear him describe the injuries and diseases to which the objects of his veneration and care were subject. He had dwelt among old panels and canvases all his life. His father had pursued the same profession before him, so that from infancy he had been familiar with the terms of his craft, and he had thus by degrees acquired a thorough intimacy with the principles upon which the art of painting rests. By dint of much reading, consultation with eminent painters, and long and painstaking investigation, he had succeeded in classifying the beauties and defects of those painters whom he was accustomed to designate his representative masters. His views of art and artists appeared to me much more extensive and liberal than even original artists ordinarily entertain, and for obvious reasons. He could admit into his good graces works curious and rare in their way, which it would be policy to avoid where the formation of a popular style is the object of the students. He could dilate with equal zest upon the quaint, hard, luminous compositions of John Van Eyck, and the graces and subtile transitions of light and shade of Correggio. Not that he assumed to understand or to care for all the styles of painting ; but he had really mastered and was deeply interested in the leading styles which at various times have characterised this noble art. He was in judgment and in liberality an accomplished connoisseur. I was only too glad to place myself under such a man, in preference to remaining a mere 'hackney-likeness taker.' My own experience as a restorer had, as I have explained, been confined to wood and stone ; but then I had not wholly neglected the art of painting. At the very outset of my

career in the capacity of picture-restorer, my master found me neither incompetent nor inapt, while every day added to my knowledge and consequent usefulness.

The previous owner of the princely residence where we were engaged, had remained through life what nature had designed him to be—to wit, an admirable steady-going country gentleman. He had regarded his pictures in the light of harmless dead stock, which neither ate nor drank ; he saw them daily and hourly, but it never occurred to him that they needed the appliances of art to preserve them. He had critical sagacity in all matters pertaining to husbandry. Live stock he could contemplate with the eye of an experienced grazier. More, he was proud of his tenantry and kind to his labourers. But, meanwhile, the Raphaels, Titians, and Correggios, abandoned to neglect, were silently undergoing the ordinary process of decay consequent thereupon, and were soon to become (for all our titled farmer cared to the contrary) the mere ashes of splendour, and rubbish of elegance and beauty. The grandfather of his present lordship had also manifested great capacity and a noble disposition as a landowner, but he was equally neglectful of his pictures. He, however, while possessing little regard for well-stocked farms, betrayed the utmost indifference for the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the old masters. It was his ambition to be foremost in the ranks of ornamental gardeners, and he might be said to care most for whatever came under the head of gardening. Grottos fountains, gold and silver fishes, choice exotics, and variegated birds, were with him absorbing objects of attention. These were to him health, life, fame, and happiness. But while his gardens presented to the eye the aspect of

fairly land, the pictures in the gallery remained in the gallery unregarded. Works of men pre-eminently gifted, a study for the most exalted intellects, were forgotten in their noble owner's passion for horticulture. In consequence of all this neglect on the part of his lordship's predecessors, we found plenty to do in the palace ; nearly every work of art required renovation more or less.

Some of the Italian masterpieces, being executed upon a soft, spongy wood, similar in its nature to lime-tree, had been half consumed, as far as the panels were concerned, by the slow ravages of an insignificant worm, so that in each instance the surface, or the paint—that is, the picture—needed transferring, an operation requiring great care and delicacy of handling. It was my early task to remove the remaining portions of decayed timber from the back of these pictures, for which task my experience in wood and sharp-edged tools had qualified me in no ordinary degree. This was especially fortunate, as on this account I at once made good wages, which I much needed. But for my skill in this department it would have been necessary to have risked sending the pictures in question to London. Stop saws, chisels, planes, pieces of glass, files, steel scrapers, grit, and solvents, are some of the means employed in 'transferring,' and I was tolerably conversant with the handling of these various instruments. It is not generally known that the finest pictures in Europe have been thus transferred from wood to canvas, as the only means of saving them from utter ruin. The French restorers appear first to have ventured upon this ingenious and delicate expedient in the case of some Raphaels and Titians which had decayed to the last extremity. The surface of the

picture to be operated upon is protected by layers of paper. These are pasted on, and finally a coarse gauze is added. When dry, the picture is fastened, face downward, on to a smooth bench, and the decayed timber cut, planed, scraped, and ground away, until only the coating, about the thickness of a wafer—that is, the picture itself—remains. One or two canvases, some inches larger than the picture, are then carefully and smoothly cemented to the back surface thus presented. When dry, the painting is then taken up from the bench, and strained upon a stretching frame, just as if it were a picture painted upon canvas; and the paper being moistened and removed from the front of the work, the process is completed. Many an invaluable painting has by this process obtained a new lease of its existence. We know that fifty years will go far to destroy the canvases upon which our masterpieces depend for support, and that it has only been by cementing the worn-out canvases upon new ones that we are now in possession of the majority of our finest pictures. ‘Cleaning,’ ‘stopping,’ ‘stippling,’ ‘lining,’ ‘transferring,’ ‘cradling,’ ‘battening,’ and ‘veneering,’ are only a few of the terms which express the several operations of the restorer’s art. Of course mechanical operations, such as I have attempted to describe, may be performed without a profound knowledge of the design and colouring of the picture; but the case entirely alters in respect to the restorer’s qualifications when the picture has to be freed from darkened oils, repaints, and varnishes. No one should presume to employ either friction or solvents upon the surface of a fine picture without long previous training. This is not the same as saying no one should go into the water until he has learned to swim.

There are innumerable indifferent pictures and sign-boards upon which the student might be permitted to exercise his noviciate hand ; and when he is careful and successful with unimportant examples, he may be permitted to practise upon works of importance which ascertained skill alone has a right to touch. But, after all, there are but few whom the most careful training would make competent restorers ; and there is no making rules for those upon whom nature has showered her choicest gifts. Great natural genius will succeed where mere talent, with no matter how much experience, would signally fail. In some respects there is an analogy between the aims of the restorer and the engraver. It should be the chief pride of the engraver to reproduce as faithfully as possible the several peculiarities of a painter's works ; and it is the purpose of the restorer to understand those peculiarities, in order that while treating the surface of the picture he may not injure it. Marc Antonio engraving under the eye of Raphael, rendered that master's pictures with so much skill as to lose very little of their noble character. The restorer should always work as though the eye of the master were upon him. Many who have attempted to engrave Raphael have paid too little regard to his style, and piqued themselves too much upon making fine showy prints. The restorer must know better than commit this fault. The careless and ill-informed engraver merely confounds or misrepresents the master, but the tasteless, or unprincipled or incompetent restorer destroys the picture. Hence while for the glory of art it would be well for engravers to copy the style of great masters, instead of inventing styles of their own, it is of far greater importance that the picture-restorer

should study to understand, in order that he may religiously conserve the works of genius entrusted to his care.

Such were some of the precepts and principles which my employer, the London restorer, enforced and practised.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE TWO RUYSDAELS.

MY strength and my prospects lay in the aptitude which I betrayed for the work of restoration. It was, I found, no light matter to satisfy the judgment of the numerous connoisseurs who visited our studio in the palace during the latter part of our stay. By arrangement, the first year (we were two years in all at the work) was spent in the renovation of the larger picture galleries, and in repairing a painted ceiling and staircase which had gone well-nigh to ruin. The gems of the cabinet were reserved until the noble owner's return from the continent, accompanied by some friends who had the reputation of being eminent critics in matters of art. In all the difficulties of the undertaking I was always permitted to be present and to take part in the delicate and interesting operations to be performed ; and each day my employer grew more and more confident of 'making an artist of me,' and he predicted for me an eminent career, provided I courted it in the metropolis. We found the pictures, one and all, very much in the same dull, monotonous state to which they had been reduced by their long neg-

lect. For half a century the damp mists of autumn had penetrated the rooms, had settled upon the surfaces of the pictures, and absorbed each particle of dust, until it was no longer possible to distinguish the glowing colours of the Flemish and Venetian masters from the sombre and pallid hues of the Spanish school. If possible, the smaller cabinet pictures were even more obscured than the larger and more imposing treasures of the gallery. Among a hundred other examples, by Flemish and Dutch artists, were a pair of sea-pieces by the two Ruysdaels, which had a sort of European reputation. It was by special desire that Sir R—— was present during the process of cleaning these two pictures. In their obscure state they might have passed with tolerably good judges as specimens from one and the same pencil ; alike in the character of their subjects, both having passed through the same ordeal under time's mellowing hand ; they were of a kindred complexion—to wit, a murky mellowish brown. This tint was spread equally over the entire pictures, producing an effect similar to that which smoked glass would produce if placed betwixt the eye and natural objects. By some of his lordship's friends this dismal tone was declared to be 'superb.' Old Lord E—— pronounced it to be the true 'golden.'

'Golden it may be,' said Sir R——, 'but there is no legitimate excuse for its presence on these pictures.'

'You would not, Sir R——, think for one moment of disturbing the mellow warmth of those Ruysdaels?'

'I would recommend that this unsightly varnish and dirt be removed, in order that we may contemplate the pictures in the condition in which the master left them, as nearly as possible.'

‘But *that* is the original, natural tone, is it not?’

‘On the contrary, it is almost as unlike the colour of Jacob Ruysdael, as white is to black.’

‘You astonish me, Sir R——.’

‘I see no reason for astonishment, my lord.’

‘Indeed, I always understood that this mellow warmth, or glazing, which you condemn, was the glory of an old picture. I should like you to explain more fully, Sir R——, before the destructive process for removing it proceeds, what wonderful effects you can expect to obtain by its removal.’

‘I promise you effects perfectly natural. You will observe, my lord, those breakers on the fore-ground rocks are of the same tint as the smaller waves in the middle distance, and that the silken flags of the remote vessels are as legible as those which are nearer at hand. How do you reconcile this want of gradation in a master remarkable for realising the most subtle variations and transitions of light, shade, and tint?’

‘I would rather that you continued your explanations, Sir R——, and you will oblige us much by being very definite.’

‘Very good, my lord. This water, which reminds one strongly of mud, ought to be beyond question transparent in the shaded portions; the foam wants motion, and the billows have lost form, grace, and rotundity. I will explain to you why those flags in the midst of the ocean are as prominent as those which are near. Jacob Ruysdael, like all great artists, modelled his distances firmly in solid colour, and the brush-marks have become filled with dirt, varnish, and oil, which, having become darkened, have perverted the master’s intention entirely;

in fact, we have now a yellowish brown for what was once a delicate grey. I have scarcely ever seen a fine landscape in which the distances were not obscured and confounded by discolorations of this sort. Our own Wilson's pictures are instances in which the remote objects are loaded with colour in such a manner as to collect and retain dust, dirt, and superfluous varnish and oil. The air-tints—the ærial perspective, which commonly is the charm of a landscape, is entirely eaten up by these corrupt glazes.'

'But coming more directly to the Ruysdaels under notice, Sir R——, pray inform us as to what good we are to expect from the removal of these time-honoured "glazings."'

'I will ensure you more space, air, and light—greater variety in form and colour—and a multitude of details touched in with lightness, precision, and truth, which are now buried in oblivion. Beneath yon overhanging cloud the sea shall look dark and gloomy—a track of sunlight will illumine the distant sails, and reveal the silken flags, crimped and fluttering in the breeze, as if they were endowed with life and motion.'

'Enough, Sir R——, we know you for a great connoisseur; as far as I am concerned, you have full license to do your worst.'

This discussion on picture-cleaning was attentively listened to by the noble owner of the pictures, who, not possessing much critical knowledge on the subject, was only too pleased to raise discussions so interesting to him as the possessor of art-treasures. Sir R—— had reigned supreme in our *atelier* until the arrival of his venerable opponent, who differed from him on all occasions. Lord

E—— was a veritable relic of the old school of *cognoscenti*, who were great sticklers for rust, mildew, and dirt, and who thought pictures and statues very ‘much enhanced by age and decay.’ Sir R—— spoke with the authority of one who had paid attention to the subject, and calculated the advantages which accrue to art from restorations judiciously conducted. It transpired in the end, however, that my master, the manipulator, was better informed on the subject in dispute than his illustrious advisers. I said that the two Ruysdaels strongly resembled each other in tone and subject: but it remained to be seen that they were not so nearly allied when regarded as works of art. They had always passed for a pair, and had cost the same amount of money. The observations of the two critics, although pointed especially to one picture, were understood to refer to both; but, on my master receiving instructions to clean them, he took the liberty of telling Sir R—— that the two works, seemingly so much alike, were in reality by different hands—the one being by Jacob Ruysdael, the other by his brother Solomon. At first, this announcement created some astonishment and doubt in the mind of Sir R——, but he was speedily converted when the two productions were placed in juxtaposition, and underwent a minute investigation.’

‘This is no very flattering discovery,’ he exclaimed, turning to the owner. ‘The pictures must be cleaned notwithstanding.’

‘I can recover all the effects you have enumerated, Sir R——, in the one case,’ said the restorer; ‘but I must forewarn you and my lord that no such beauties are to be found in the imitation.’

‘True,’ returned Sir R——; ‘but you will find I anticipate a relative degree of excellence in it.’

‘I must tell you, Sir R——, that I have no hope of finding any beauties whatever in the imitation. It is not only painted by an inferior hand, but, moreover, by an inferior process. It is in the knowledge of the means and the methods employed by the old masters that the success of our operations in a large measure depends. We know that Jacob Ruysdael painted *his* pictures carefully and honestly, manifesting great discernment in the choice of his ‘ground tint.’ It was owing to this precaution that his works retain so much of their early natural freshness. Solomon, on the contrary, possessing none of the feeling or ambition, had none of his brother’s anxiety for the goodness and durability of his productions. Solomon aimed at the rapid manufacture of an article resembling in leading features his brother’s masterpieces. He painted, for instance, on a dark ‘ground,’ for the sake of the facility it afforded, and the consequence is, that his counterfeits have become blackened by time, while his brother’s thoughtful and conscientious compositions have still a grey, mineral-like solidity. The brownish tinge on the Jacob Ruysdael is occasioned by an incrustation upon the surface, which can be removed; while, in contradistinction, the blackness in the example before us, by Solomon Ruysdael, is a radical defect, and utterly incurable.’

‘Just as I have always asserted,’ cried Sir R—— when my master had thus expressed his opinion; ‘these odious films upon old pictures are as favourable to your imitators as night and darkness are to burglars.’

‘What, then, would you advise under present circumstances?’ inquired the owner of my employer.

‘My advice, my lord, is, that you permit me to restore the true picture, and that you dismiss the counterfeit to some other room; but previously to your carrying out this sentence, should you desire it, I will convince you of its justice.’

After a lapse of a few days, the genuine picture, the Jacob Ruysdael, shone forth in its original state, very natural, and very beautiful. It was now a picture which not only the learned connoisseur, but even the humblest spectator also could admire and understand. No such transformation took place in the counterfeit. After many unavailing attempts to get at its supposed beauties, it was formally dismissed to a modester chamber.

But to return to my personal affairs. My employer fortunately brought with him his family. From the first he manifested so much concern for my welfare, that I soon seized an opportunity of telling him the history of my love for the Italian girl, with which he was much interested, and he considerately introduced Laura to his wife and family, who received her with every possible kindness. In fact, no sooner had Laura set foot in the village, than the whole population, numbering some seventy individuals, old and young, declared spontaneously in her favour. Had she made her first appearance in that rural district graced with the wings of an angel, she could hardly have created a greater sensation. Visitors came from all parts to view the pictures and statues, and had familiarised those humble people with fair faces enough, but still, one and all seemed taken with the fine presence of the beautiful girl from over the sea.

Even pompous Samuel, his lordship's porter, opened his small eyes, and left his carved chair, when Laura passed through his gate, and ventured his opinion on the state of the weather and prospects of the harvest in a manner meant to be exceedingly polite. The rustics vied with each other in presenting the new favourite with the choicest of their flowers. Dame Britton sent in a parcel of honey ; old Tom, the hedger and ditcher, left a yellow-beaked blackbird in a wicker cage ; the children opened all the gates gratis ; and, to crown all, the old house-keeper at the Abbey, a very grave personage, invited the ' foreign young lady ' to tea.

I had now long acquired that feeling of security and independence which the consciousness of possessing a fair share of practical ability imparts. The Signor (Laura's father) had resumed his usual habits of modeling statuettes and gambling. We sometimes met, and he always expressed unbounded confidence in whatever I did or proposed to do. ' Laura's visits to the village,' he said, ' were peculiarly agreeable to him,' and that he was ' much affected by the kind reception she had met with.' A happy improvement, too, in her health was manifest since her change of life—not that she had ever really been ill ; only close toil and long watching over her father's strange and desperate career had begun to imprint upon her face marks of care.

CHAPTER XLII.

LAURA BEZZA.

THERE was no longer any question, nor any doubt to raise a question, that Laura was mine. The Signor entertained no other idea, and, as for Madame Mitchel, she always received us in the light of young people about to be married, and talked of little else beside the coming ceremony. But then came the difficulty of finding a home with little means on hand, with also very undefined prospects, and moreover that greatest of difficulties, the Signor himself. To suppose that Laura would ever forsake her father, however fallen he might become, would have shown an utter want of insight into her character. I who had learned to read her thoughts in her face could not be deceived on this point. It was for this very devotion to her parent that I most of all loved her; and when I found her pale and her dark eyes dilated with grief, I knew that the sharp rattle of the dice-box might be heard on the stairs. At such times her thoughts would wander away, and Madame Mitchel and myself talk on unheeded by her side. Meanwhile her ear was on the stretch to catch the faintest echo of her father's voice, which ever and anon resounded through the house indicating his good or evil luck: sometimes in peals of laughter or bacchanalian song, or, as the mood directed, in exclamatory curses. At intervals, when the last stake was lost, the Signor would resume his work: and gazing on his noble presence as he sat by the lamplight modelling his statuettes, no one would suppose they beheld the

man of yesternight waiting with blanched face the turn of the dice. Then in those hours of peace, when every word of the artist's tongue was a wise one—what a change passed over the daughter's countenance! Often have I seen her weep for joy, and her eyes—wont to express anguish, doubt, and fear—flash with delight, and their dark lashes open and shut fan-like, as the butterfly basking in sunlight plays sportingly with its wings. It was delightful to watch this pair, the artist and his child, when thus employed, the father in works of fancy and creation, the daughter in the humbler task of preparing plaster casts for the shops and street vendors: and great was my happiness in sitting by Laura's side taking my share in the work. But what pleased me most of all was the perfect confidence which these exiles had in myself, humble as I really was, considered as an artist: in comparison with Signor Bezza I was but an infant in attainments; and as for the daughter, her beauty and her manners alike fitted her to shine in the palaces whence her kindred had been driven. If I had but one wish it was that I might serve her; and she knew my mind so well that I had never any fear of hidden griefs. Her heart was mine; to me she told her sorrows; to me she came for help always, and hence I knew she loved me. I was with her in happy hours, and I was present when no happiness was hers. She looked for me, depended on me and on no one else, save that in Madame Mitchel we both found a common friend and mother.

And Madame Mitchel told pretty anecdotes of the Signor, of Laura's mother, and of Laura herself. She told how shy Laura was, when but a child she first came

with her parents to the inn : how at first she would barely show her face half hidden in raven ringlets behind the half-open door : and how she lisped her own pretty language in her own pretty way : and then how she would venture down a flight of stairs and peep into the bar parlour, and speak her two or three small English words, and fly away with her sweet silvery laugh : and how, as time went by, she made herself understood in little matters : and then how her mother died and left the poor Signorina in her (Madame Mitchel's) charge altogether, and how she took the child to her breast, to her own bed, and washed and dressed her, as if she had been her own child, and taught her her alphabet, and to read little stories : and how the tiny thing wrote a story, in imitation of those she read, about a little girl who was born poor and came to be a princess, and would plague Madame to get it printed like other books. Then came the parting, when Laura went to live in the old carver's cottage, where Madame visited on a Sunday, after evening service, to take tea ; but that was very seldom, for the inn was always overflowing with foreigners who came, as I have said, from all parts of Europe, and were constantly going in and out, sometimes staying but an hour to rest. And as real treasures, diamonds, pearls, works of art and genius never weary, but grow more and more precious the more they are looked at and understood so, day by day, did the beautiful Laura grow more and more precious to me, until it appeared that every object in the world beside was as nothing in comparison with her in whom no blemish could by any possibility be found.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE CATASTROPHE AND THE FLIGHT.

MY forebodings were too well founded. The cloud at length burst. Bezza, as I gleaned from Madame Mitchel, became more and more addicted to gaming. An addition had been made to the number of his friends (?) in the person of a Polish gentleman, a teacher of languages. The absence of Laura left her father even more license than he had been accustomed to take while she resided wholly in the tavern. He now, to use the old carver's words, literally turned night into day. The Pole was of a good family: but having rendered himself obnoxious to the despotic rulers of his own country (which ought to be considered something in his favour), he sought refuge in England, and procured a pittance by teaching the language of his fathers to the stranger who gave him shelter and protection. He took up his abode at the 'house of call,' with others of his countrymen. Here he found no scope for the display of many noble qualities which he assuredly possessed. Excitement offered itself in the dice-box; he found sympathy in Bezza; their misfortunes had originated in the same cause, and they sought solace in the same vice. What crime will not poverty, loneliness, and despair lead to? He came one night and staked his last shilling. The game ran high. He won back in an hour the losses of a week; he had come prepared with false dice. Aroused to watchfulness, his rival's keen glance detected the villany, and denounced it in no measured terms. Then

those two men, who had often met as friends, became hateful in each other's eyes, and soon keen words gave way to keener weapons. It chanced I was with Madame in her little bar, talking over the prospects of my speedy marriage with Laura, when the alarm was raised. I hurried upstairs, but all too late. The Italian passed me with pallid face, and still grasping the dagger. I found the Pole attended by old Lazarus, who, it appeared, happened to be at hand at the moment of the quarrel. The wounded man was perfectly cool and collected. His first and only care was to ascertain whether the alarm had spread, for the affrighted Jew had shouted 'ten thousand murders!' Madame Mitchel came up, and the Pole conjured her by all that was sacred to shut her doors, so as not to allow a breath of what had transpired to escape. He would not, he said, have Bezza molested for the wide world. He had himself given provocation, and then sought to hide his fault by appealing to the knife.

'That is all very good, and very well, my dear sir, broke in the Jew; 'but if you should die and the officers come, they will make *me* know all about it.'

'I have taken care of that,' said Madame; 'you may make yourself perfectly easy on that score. If you have any regard for me, my house, or the Signor Bezza, don't utter a syllable about what you have seen. We have had noise enough; now let us see what it all amounts to.'

The Pole had been bred to the medical profession, and was enabled to calm our fears with some show of authority. He assured us that, although the wound was very painful, it was not more dangerous than the prick

of a needle. Notwithstanding, Madame procured lint and bandages enough to stock a hospital, and, by instructions from the patient himself, the injured part was dressed, he all the time watching the progress of the operation through a looking-glass, with a sort of interest he might have felt had he himself been operating upon some other person. The dagger had glanced from a rib and lacerated the left arm. The wound on the breast looked terrible at first sight, but, upon investigation, turned out to be a mere abrasion. That night I insisted upon taking up my quarters in the patient's room, in order to pay him any attentions of which he might stand in need. I felt how much depended on his recovery, and essayed to hide from myself the gloomy consequences which would follow upon his death. I tried to sleep ; but the red spot upon the breast grew larger and more terrible to contemplate in my dreams. Before the dawn of morning I stole softly to the patient's side, and, finding him calmly sleeping, I again lay down, and tried to lull my fears. This time I was more successful. It was broad daylight when I awoke, and this time to find myself alone in the room. The Pole had flown no one knew whither. In the confusion, consequent upon this discovery, I did not observe, while looking about for an explanation, that I held one in my hand. A slip of paper fell from my fingers on the floor which revealed all. It ran thus :—

‘Keep the affair of last night secret. I am on the track of Signor Bezza. It is my hope to find and bring him back : and spare the sufferings of his daughter. If I find him not, adieu ! I shall never return.’

I sought Madame Mitchel and showed her the note,

inquiring with some foreboding for the father and daughter, only to learn that they had left on the over night, and that they had done so by Madame Mitchel's advice, backed by the persuasion of old Lazarus. They packed up, and departed by the night coach to London, where they hoped to find means of leaving the country altogether. Madame had informed the Pole of this intention, and hence his sudden pursuit. The generous landlady had provided the means of flight, 'wishing and hoping for the best,' to use her own words when she beheld my grief. 'It is best for you,' she observed, 'for Laura, for the Signor, for myself, for he has well-nigh borrowed all the money I had in the house.' In spite of my own limited means, I could not help feeling for Madame Mitchel. The work of restoration at the palace had concluded. Nothing remained for me but to follow the Italians, whom the Jew said he could find easily; that they were not likely to leave London, for want of money, before we could overtake them. Taking 20*l.*—all my savings—I paid Madame Mitchel half that sum on Laura's account, and set out with the Jew for London. If any man could find the fugitives, that man was Lazarus. I proposed taking the coach in order to hasten our speed; but the Jew told me I was out of my mind; that there was no need of hurry; that he had places to call at by the way: and his 'by the way' meant every town, village, and farm-house within sight of the turn-pike road. Often, to my disgust, he would ascend an eminence, and cast his eyes over the vale, and whenever a remote church spire was beheld he would arrange a digression there, and sigh, and wish that the place was more near at hand.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SIGNOR ALTOVITI.

LAME LAZARUS rented, among others, a large house in Hatton Garden, and in the back premises and upper rooms he had accumulated every conceivable class of goods which go by the common name of 'antiquities.' These, for the most part, were huddled and heaped together without the slightest regard to order or care—for it was part of his plan to keep objects which were old and decayed in that condition, and to impart to new productions the appearance of age. Upon shelves he had hoarded up broken china and bronzes; tables were strewn with medals and coins; about the floor lay rotten panels and canvases, which revealed grim countenances, dimly visible, and all manner of hideous subjects, looking so vague and unearthly that the manner and means by which they were created could by no possibility be guessed. All the various styles of painting and diverse subjects were sunk into one level obscurity bordering closely upon oblivion. 'Speculative' was the term applied to these commodities. In a loft above he had also stored an immense assortment of carvings, armour, and tapestry of all kinds, and all alike rotten, stained, tattered, battered, rusted, and tarnished by design no less than by the wear and tear of years. Darkness and dirt, however, were reserved for the rubbish. No one knew better than my friend Lazarus how to bring out and set off to advantage the beauties of a really artistic production. Good pictures were revived and put

into costly frames, and exquisite bits of porcelain protected by glass shades. Our collector had in his employable artists, such as carvers in marble, menders of china, who could model missing bits of crown Derby or old Worcester with great nicety, or create and fit an absent limb to a figure in a way quite imperceptible to the ordinary eye. To these workers he paid very little money, while he abused them very much in slack seasons, telling them that he got nothing by their labours, that all his profits were derived from the inferior articles on which no restorations were made.

It was intended to place me with the carvers ; but about the time of my arrival in London the Jew was doing a great stroke of business in pictures, and therefore, much to my gratification, he placed me in the department for the restoration of old paintings, amid all the paraphernalia of the craft, and under the guidance of an accomplished artist, whom the master with his usual shrewdness had selected to work on the masterpieces. This man was a native of Florence, named Altoviti, a young and extremely handsome man, who wore the best of clothes and displayed a fine taste in jewellery, all in a marked contrast with the principal of the establishment. But, above all, Altoviti was, at least in outward appearances, of a happy disposition, beholding' all things in glowing colours, and making sport of circumstances which might have produced quite an evil influence upon less sanguine natures. He kept a guitar always in tune by his side, and would often beguile a few moments in singing his country's songs. Where he was it was no easy matter to be dull. Yet he was not without feeling for those who were unhappy. It was strictly ordered by

Lame Lazarus that the Signor, his 'great gun,' as he called him, should work alone and hold no manner of intercourse with the inferior people about the house ; that, above all, he was not to make cheap the secrets of the art by which he imparted the glow of youth to the decayed works of the early masters. So far, however, from carrying out these injunctions of the mercenary Hebrew, the Italian, being fond of company, liked to have in his studio everybody about the house ; so that we had concerts, and conversaziones, mostly when the master was abroad, which was daily. Besides, being a real artist, he treated with contempt all idea of secrecy in his mode of working, for he knew very well that we could no more mimic the graceful strokes of his pencil than rival the exquisite strains of his fine voice, which he poured forth with so much fervour that even Lazarus himself could not always resist them. The artist seemed to do very much as he liked with the dealer. He often caricatured him on the wall, and it was wonderful with what good-humour the victim resigned himself to those satirical freaks. The principal's nose and under lip were considerably larger than ordinary. These salient features appeared in the caricaturist's transcript multiplied by twelve, with an aspect hideously droll. For the matter of these wall pictures, we all shared alike ; the wilful, wanton satirist spared not even himself. His broad, manly chest exaggerated became the breast of a stout turkey cock, in the style of which bird the Signor was pleased to caricature himself. Sometimes, indeed, the Jew would rage and storm in bad Italian, but this only added to the fun, for then the tormentor would seize a stick and limp up and down the room in perfect imitation



of the Jew, and on those occasions there was no help for it, every one laughed out right ; even the master himself caught the infection, and laughed until the tears rolled down the furrows of his sallow cheeks. But then, as Lazarus said, the Tuscan was his right hand, a mine of wealth, a fortune. Besides, he was in the Jew's power, and was coaxed and treated better on this account, for the Jew liked to have people in his power. The Jew discounted his bills, sold him jewellery, rings for his own taper fingers, and brooches, bracelets, and locketts for his friends, to whom they were appropriate, of whom the Italian had a host. In myself, the good-humoured foreigner found a subject of pleasantries second only to the Hebrew. My provincial aspect took him quite aback. He had never counted, he said, upon seeing anything so matchless as the cut of my coat ; my stooping figure and round shoulders, acquired by too much sitting, qualified me for his 'Gobbo.' Yet while he satirised he was partial to me, and instructed me in the principles of a beautiful art, a sure way to win my gratitude and affection.

Signor Altoviti, while he made sad havoc of the English language in general, had by some means picked up many idiomatic expressions which he used effectively enough. For instance, he was pleased sometimes to designate himself as 'a cobbler of old pictures.' But while he thus spoke with levity of the calling in which he excelled all others, he was, notwithstanding, jealous of his art, and sensitive in all matters in which artists are most sensitive. 'I am a cobbler,' he would say, 'I botch pictures.' In company he would not hear himself called an artist without contradiction. At times he was wont

to say that he felt inclined to creep under the table when the imputation was made. In happier moments, however, he would dilate upon the subtleties of the art which he had mastered in such a way as to make his hearers believe almost that the restoration of damaged pictures required far greater accomplishments than were usually possessed by the creative artists themselves. To me, at least, he made it well-nigh appear that the old masters painted to obtain the honour of having their pictures restored by Signor Altoviti. When a great picture came into his hands which had been tampered with by some amateur or housekeeper, his rage knew no bounds. Flemish and French pictures he either did not understand or despised. When he spoke of Florentine and Roman design, and Venetian colour, he was as grand and delightful as he was practical. He taught me how certain colours had faded, and how others which looked faded were corroded by oils. In the secret of Venetian colouring he was profound. It was wonderful to watch the blackened canvases resume their ancient splendour, as he passed, in rapid succession, the well-chosen solvents over their long-neglected surfaces. He knew what he was seeking, he would say, and he knew when he had found it. More especially he had a remedy for one particular colour, a warm green, which is to be found only in Venetian pictures, and which in uncleaned pictures of that school always appears as a dark rich liquorice brown. The crust on this colour is found to consist of an oil varnish glaze, which time has darkened and corrupted as we find it. No mild ordinary remedy will remove this incrustation, for it is found so hardened that the sharpest steel instrument will barely raise it. Yet

in the twinkling of an eye Signor Altoviti would remove it, by means which in less skilful hands would have left the canvas bare. Genius in restoration, as the highest skill in surgery, will as assuredly triumph as mere talent will as assuredly fail. And Altoviti was pleased to instruct me, and thus by degrees I progressed in my studies, and gave promise of becoming a second Altoviti myself—at least, so said my instructor, who could pay a compliment even better, if that were possible, than he could renovate an injured masterpiece of art.

CHAPTER XLV.

FORLORN HOPES.

MEANWHILE the months went by, and I could gain no intelligence of Signor Bezza and his daughter. The Jew had never any leisure to be spoken to on other subjects than those connected with the business ever immediately before him—his money-getting. He preferred to speak of mending broken vases, to any speculative repairs of broken hearts. When he thought he was unheard, I have listened to him apostrophising the fragments of what had perhaps once been a noble piece of Sèvres ware, in words as fervent in tone and as full of distress as any lover would call to his aid. Now dilating upon the proportion, texture, and tints, of the thing, as if it had appeared to his eye before accident had reduced it to ruin; then lamenting over the worthless shattered remains, until he would work himself

almost to frenzy. Yet it was not because he cared for fine proportions, glowing colours, and soft textures of glaze that he grew excited, but because he could not reunite the fragments of the work, which, when whole, had represented so many hundred francs. Greed of gain and love are worn topics, and what can be said that is new on the subject of hopes deferred ?

Night after night, when shops were closed, and often in the rain, I lingered in the dismal streets of Clerkenwell, or wandered about the purlieus of Saffron and Back Hills. Wherever the voice of an Italian might be heard, there might I be seen staring about me like one lost, until I became familiar with all the strolling musicians and image-makers in those parts. The poorest boy with only a white mouse in a box, or a monkey under his jacket, became of more than common regard in my eyes because he spoke in a language which, little as I understood it, was musical and dear to me. I often parted with my hard-earned money to these wanderers, on their return to Clerkenwell sometimes as late as midnight, to purchase a little delay and talk with them in such broken and disjointed manner as I was able, until, after many attempts, I made them, as I thought, comprehend, and how often was I deceived in supposing that they did understand me ! What was the object of all these nightly watchings and questionings ? Every figure lurking about in court and alley would seem to take the forms of those I sought. My eyes would follow some more than commonly attractive girlish shape as it went tripping by until night and darkness swallowed it up and left me alone ; when in my room I have thrown my weary body on the boards, where I slept like others who

were as poor as myself, and would still in imagination pursue my search, and continue my fruitless watchings and inquiries. No wonder Signor Altoviti called me his 'Gobbo.'

I have said that Altoviti appeared happy. Yet I sometimes fancied that I detected sadness in the tones of his voice. It was so. By degrees he grew less joyous, and then I noticed that he ceased to joke upon my gait, clothes, and pensive look, which he had been accustomed to say were particularly droll. Once or twice, while I was at work, I noticed that he sat eyeing me as if with some personal interest, and afterwards, strangely enough, his caricature of me in chalk disappeared from the studio wall, where it had often provoked a smile. I attached no importance to this circumstance. It did not occur to me then that once before in my life an incident precisely similar in respect of the caricature had worked a great impression on my mind, and brought about a happy change in my affairs, and influence on my future life.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE PRINT COLLECTOR.

THE Jew, I have said, was accustomed to abuse his workmen in slack times, and pay them little even when he most needed their aid, and this may be explained by the fact that our peculiar and obscure kind of occupation was only to be obtained from a few houses, and these were scattered about and little known. When work fell

off, our hours of labour were reduced, as a matter of course, and, as a matter of course, our wages also. To this rule Signor Altoviti formed the sole exception in the Jew's establishment. He always made full time, and received full pay, not because the Jew loved him one whit more than he loved others, but simply because the town perhaps contained but one Altoviti in the art of picture restoration ; and therefore, if the Jew had once parted with him, he might not have been able to fill his place when first-class work came in. In these times of leisure some of the hands stayed about the house, and amused themselves in ordinary ways, to while away the time, while they went into debt for board and lodgings ; others, myself among the number, found out little expedients for earning the means of existence. A few doors round the corner, in a small street, hard by, old and curious, and, in fact, all sorts of prints and etchings were sold. This shop was a favourite resort of mine, and I soon became intimate with the owner, and derived much useful information from him on the subject of engraving and engravers in general. His stock included books on the subject of the fine arts, some of a most curious and rare description. Most picture-dealers and collectors knew this print-seller, because it often happened that where paintings which had come into their possession had been engraved they were anxious to acquire such engravings, in order to add interest and enhance the value of the original works. When my acquaintance with the print-seller had ripened into friendship, he proposed that I should rent his third-floor back room, to which I readily assented. The house was old, but spacious, having evidently been once occupied by people of consequence,

before it was converted into a shop. My landlord occupied the basement floor, which, beside the print-room, included a small triangular-shaped back parlour, which looked into a court. In this room he took his meals, smoked, and slept, in a lonely, snug sort of way ; for though, like myself, he had no relations to comfort or annoy him—being a downright bookworm—the dreariest of winter nights seemed to him not too long. By his advice I bought a straw mattress, which could be rolled up and placed in a convenient closet during the day, and I was thus enabled to receive a patron, if one chanced to appear, without betraying the extremely limited resources of my establishment. If my friend was better off than myself, he never showed it by his mode of life, which was economical in all things. Following his example, I lived on a mere trifle. A near market supplied little dainties for next to nothing, and our evening meals were, considering all things, both varied and sumptuous. Were it to the purpose, I might say something on the subject of marketing for a supper in London. If my friend had not hoarded up gold, he certainly possessed a stock in trade which represented no inconsiderable fortune. He had stored up choice copies of works which I have since ascertained were of the scarcest and most precious description, and which, regarded in the light of property, were almost as readily available as Bank of England notes. In the works of Holbein alone he was rich beyond any known collectors. Among others, I particularly remember well the ‘Dance of Death,’ ‘The Picture Alphabet,’ and the ‘Panegyric on Folly.’ Of the first he had copies of twenty editions ; of the second a corresponding number ; and of the

illustrated Erasmus a great many. At certain seasons the print-collector closed his shop, and went about from morning till night in search of these ancient treasures of art, calling at every book-stall and broker's shop. In addition, he kept up an uninterrupted communication with the auctioneers, in order to secure timely information of sales when illustrated books and prints were to be disposed of. To this indefatigable acquaintance I was much indebted in many ways. He not only instructed me in the qualities of prints, but put me into the way of procuring an honest crust at the same time. By his advice I made small copies in oil of striking engravings. These he left for sale with dealers, or, as he made it appear, sold them outright among his connexions; and he often returned at night with a few shillings, received, as he said, on my account, and without which I should often have gone supperless to bed.

CHAPTER XLVII.

CHEATED BY A PICTURE-DEALER.

THIS plan of selling my paintings altogether failed when the print-selling season kept my friend within doors. Driven to rely on my own resources, I was soon persuaded that it required as much art to sell a picture as to paint it. For nearly a week I walked about the streets with my brown paper parcel, containing copies in oil of popular prints, without meeting with a single purchaser, or any approach to one; and I never could dis-

cover the means by which my landlord had disposed of my productions, until an accident made the whole matter clear in a moment. One evening I returned home with my pack. I was quite wearied, wet through, and in no very good humour. In addition to not having effected any sales, I had left the sole of one of my shoes in a back street in Whitechapel, and had been compelled to walk back to Hatton Garden, limping through the mud. It had rained nearly all the six days of my hawking expedition, and I was half convinced that the weather had some influence on my ill luck—that the rain had put the brokers out of temper. In this mood I entered the print-seller's triangular parlour. At the same instant a customer walked into the shop in a great hurry, leaving the print-seller no time to close some slides, which he had fitted up in a closet, from which the door had been removed. One of the slides thus exposed betrayed, placed in careful order, the majority of the little pictures which I had painted, and supposed to have been sold! The kind print-seller had been no more successful than myself, but he had had the goodness to deceive me, in order to spare my feelings. Moreover, he had paid me so liberally, that I had not only lived (in a frugal manner, it is true), but, in addition, had been enabled to buy a tolerable suit of clothes, and still retain a few shillings in my pocket. I said nothing of my discovery, but, having rectified the accident to my shoe, set out on the following day to solicit work as a picture-restorer. The Jew was gone on a trip to the continent, and his establishment was well-nigh closed, so that for several weeks to come I could look for nothing from that quarter; and I felt that I ought not to impose any more copies on my patron, in

the triangular parlour. If I was unsuccessful in selling pictures, I very speedily found work. Almost the first dealer I asked gave me a job to repair three pictures of no great value. When these were nearly completed he called at my studio, and brought several others to undergo the same process. He promised me liberal payment, admired my skill, and said so many flattering things that I began to think I should be able to get a connection of my own, and work at home on better terms than I got from *Lame Lazarus*, during the picture season. Since seeing my unsold works in the slide, I had been less frequently to supper in the odd-shaped parlour. My pride had received a check. I had enjoyed my meals while I believed that they were the produce of my own toil, but the fried fish lost its flavour from the time that I found that another had paid for it. In all probability, my landlord guessed the cause of my absence from his fireside.

One morning, when I had just varnished the second lot of paintings which the dealer had left with me to renovate, the print-seller entered my studio on the third floor, a very unusual thing with him, as he was not fond of climbing three pairs of stairs, without an object in view. I was just congratulating myself on having completed my contract. As soon as the varnish was dry, I should take home the work, and receive enough to pay off all my debts; the principal one being an arrear of three weeks' rent for the room I inhabited. 'Ah, my kind friend,' I exclaimed, as the landlord entered, 'I shall have the pleasure of paying you to-morrow at the latest. See here, I have completed my task.'

'You have but a poor opinion of me,' he replied, 'if

you imagine that the trifle you owe me is the cause of my present visit.'

'I do believe it is not,' I answered; 'but that is no reason why I should not pay you.'

'You need not distress yourself on that account,' said the collector of prints. 'I will not deprive you of your little gains. The cash you are to receive may be useful to you in many ways, and I would rather, if you have no objections, wait for my rent, or, if you will allow me, I would take one or two of your little copies in payment, instead of cash.'

'You shall do nothing of the kind,' I hastened to say. 'My little pictures are rubbish which nobody besides yourself will so much as look at. You shall have no more of them, and those which you have I will take off your hands sooner or later.'

My kind friend looked distressed at these words, and was about to reply, when the picture-dealer for whom I had been working entered the room and prevented further explanation

The dealer appeared delighted, and no doubt was so, to find the restoration complete and ready to his hand, and pronounced the workmanship to be excellent. He asked if I thought the varnish sufficiently dry to allow of the pictures being removed, and, without waiting for a reply, proceeded to put them face to face, securing a small space between them by means of bits of cork at the corners, and, this done, he pinned them in a cloth, very neatly, observing as he did so, that I was the most punctual picture-renovator he had ever found, and the most careful one too. 'In proof of how highly I value your skill,' said he, 'I have brought you a portrait of my

poor father, who was, like yourself, a distinguished artist. You will perceive,' he continued, placing the portrait in a good light on the easel, 'if you examine the eyes very closely, that some mischievous villain has destroyed the pupils with a pin.' I looked and found the eyes as he described them, and he went on, 'I want you to take the smallest pencil you have, and use the utmost skill you can command, and in a happy moment, when your hand is quite steady, repair these injuries.'

I offered to do as he wished in his presence, in order, as I told him, that he might not be necessitated to lose sight of a relic which he so much valued. This he objected to, on the score of the agitation which he felt, and which he was afraid, he said, he might communicate to me. He would prefer that I should touch the picture alone, and, when I had satisfied myself, I should carry it to his house, with my account of what he owed me, and receive payment for the whole.

With this arrangement, which I confess was not quite to my satisfaction, he put his parcel of the three paintings under his arm, took an affectionate glance at his father's portrait, and left the studio, apparently wiping away a tear.

The two specks in the eyes referred to occupied me about two minutes, and, having touched them, I ran down-stairs to finish the conversation with my landlord, which had been suddenly interrupted. I told him how pleased I was with my success, and about the portrait, and the injury it had received, and of the affectionate regard with which the dealer had viewed it. My friend said little, but I fancied that he did not feel quite at his ease. In the evening, according to the minute directions

I had received, I took the portrait to the dealer's shop, and found it empty: and the words 'to let' very conspicuously daubed on the window. I did not on the instant lose heart, for I concluded that it would be easy to find him whom I sought, while I held possession of an object so dear to him—and walked leisurely down the street with the intention of making inquiries. I had not proceeded many yards when I was accosted by another picture-merchant, who was smoking his pipe at his shop door. 'What have you got there?' he asked. I showed him the portrait, and inquired if he knew where so-and-so had removed to. He answered that he did not know, and did not care—that it was no matter where, provided it was at a considerable distance, as so and-so was a doubtful party. Hearing these words I grew alarmed, and told the merchant my story from beginning to end, whereupon he burst into a loud laugh, and told me that I had been cheated, that the story of the portrait was a well-known invention, and the portrait itself was no more the likeness of the knave's father than it was his: that the story of the portrait was a stale trick that he had played on a former occasion with a pretended portrait of his mother, a worthless picture like the one in my hand, and of less value than the canvas on which it was painted.

The whole matter now appeared clear to my comprehension. I had indeed been most wofully cheated out of a week's earnings. For the first time since my residence in the metropolis, I found myself hungry, penniless, and in debt.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

BECOME A LIGHT PORTER.

IN spite of my resolution to the contrary, I was compelled to permit my friend, the print-seller, to take more of my little copies in payment for rent, and to provide necessary food ; but I felt so strongly that he took them rather out of kindness than because he wanted them, though he good-naturedly asserted the contrary, that I made him promise to allow me to redeem them when prosperity occurred to me. Meanwhile I hung about the Jew's door, in Hatton Garden, in order to be in the way in case anything turned up. After a few weeks, Lame Lazarus appeared on the scene with more than ordinary ill-temper pictured in his ill-favoured face. He would scarcely notice those who had anticipated his arrival with hopes of employment. 'There was nothing doing,' he said, 'and every promise of a bad season. People were failing everywhere : he had lost a fortune by this man, and another fortune by that man, and, in fact, he was ruined to all intents and purposes.' Such was his daily cry, and I believe that he actually did lose some fifty pounds by a barrister of Gray's Inn about this time. One morning I took my stand in the door-way, at the usual time, waiting to learn if anything had come in, when I observed the place in great confusion, and all the work-people, carvers, gilders, and china-menders passing in and out of the warehouse, laden with furniture and ornaments, which the Jew had housed for a long time for a gentleman who had been absent on the continent.

I had been thinking of turning my hand to anything rather than be beholden to any one, and here an opportunity offered. The Jew seemed to guess my thoughts, and bade me follow the example of the others, which I willingly did, and sallied forth in the direction of Bloomsbury, carrying on my head an arm-chair of the Elizabethan pattern. I managed my first load tolerably well, because I was enabled to set it down many times by the way, and take a few minutes' rest in it. Unhappily for me, Lame Lazarus caught sight of me thus comfortably seated, and, with his usual amiable disposition, contrived that my next load should be of a less convenient kind. In fact, he, with great effort, placed a figure in bronze, an Atlas carrying the globe, on my unfortunate shoulders. I staggered from the first, but would not complain. Determined to do anything in the way of honest employment, I made a desperate effort and crossed the road. The Jew amused himself by remarking that, 'whereas Atlas carried the world, I carried the world, and Atlas into the bargain.' My load seemed but a trifle, for the figure was not more than twenty inches in height ; being, however, of solid metal, its weight was considerable, and the difficulty was increased by the fact that I could not set it down to rest, as I could the chair. I had not proceeded far up Holborn Hill, and was only just opposite the Black Bull, when my foot caught in a broken pavement, and I stumbled. It was beyond my power to recover my balance. Atlas was too much for me, and, falling backward, the bronze came down with a dull, heavy thud, and the globe, which formed so striking a feature in the work of art, got loosened by the fall, and went rolling down the hill at a rapid pace. I should

have fallen myself, but for a friendly hand. Signor Altoviti, in company with the owner of the bronze, happened to be passing at the moment, and saved me from measuring my length upon the earth. The gentleman seemed amused at my mishap, and the Signor particularly so ; but I soon discovered that their merriment was not at my expense, but at the Jew's, who, following behind, had witnessed the descent of the figure, and was observed in full pursuit of the rolling globe, as it made its hasty way toward Farringdon Street, where it came to a pause, and was captured. Signor Altoviti lost no time in representing on the wall of his studio the exciting incident of the Jew in full chase of the globe, which brought the matter to a pleasant termination to all but myself, for it transpired that my foot was sprained in such a manner that I was confined to the house for a week.

This was the first time I had been absolutely helpless and dispirited. Hitherto I had imparted to no one my interest in Signor Bezza's daughter. The Jew alone knew of my attachment to Laura, and to him the affair was of the minutest concern. Every day, however, drew me nearer to the print-seller, whose kindness was irresistible. To him I told my story, and found a friendly hearer. This led to his narrating to me his curious experiences as a print-collector.

He had commenced life at twelve years of age with a shilling's worth of ballads, which he used to display on an awning, inclosing a piece of waste ground in the Commercial Road. From ballads he went into the picture business, his stock consisting of coloured engravings of 'Balaam and his Ass,' the 'Prodigal Son,' and

subjects of a like description spread out in an old umbrella. From the streets and by-ways he had aspired to a stall, from a stall to a shop, and so on, until he had become a respectable shopkeeper and celebrated as an authority in the trade and among connoisseurs in general. He had read much on the subject of his calling, and had a wonderful memory. He recognised at a glance the precise condition of an impression, and had at his tongue's end an appropriate word to describe that condition. He taught me the technicalities of the craft. He kept a back kitchen for a work-room, where he bleached and mounted his prints, and being, like Signor Altoviti, entirely free from jealousy of rivals, he permitted me to watch and learn the process of bleaching and mounting, and thus added to my stock of experience in art matters. The print-seller had an interesting face. His forehead was broad and full: his eyes large and bright, and his complexion fair and transparent. A moustache helped to hide, but did not wholly conceal, a blemish in the mouth. The lower jaw was what is termed underhung, denoting a certain coarseness of instinct, so that one was not a little surprised to find in him a pattern of modesty, a fact which I traced to the absorbing influence of his pursuit after objects of interest and refinement. Leisure he might be said never to have had, and therefore whatever evil tendencies nature might have implanted in him, no opportunities had been given them for their display. One of his great virtues was an indescribable fondness for children, on whom he doted to an unusual degree. To the tiny toddlers about his house he became almost indispensable. He dried their tears, he gave them all his waste prints, he kept heaps of copper money to

dispense among them, and bought cargoes of fruit, toys, and every conceivable thing which a child might covet. Of course he was a general favourite among the juveniles. Yet he was as melancholy a wight as ever lived. His mind, however, was elastic, and he could be witty, droll, sarcastic, and humane, all in perfection. Rare thoughts and a thousand beauties of expression fell from him in those moments, when pale Melancholy, as if out of pure compassion, had left him. In an unhappy hour and through a fatal mistake he had fallen in love. At the time of my making his acquaintance he was in his forty-first year, and grey hairs had begun to mingle their silvery freshness with the brown. His was an odd love affair for such a time of life. He told me of it with a frank simplicity I despair of imitating.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE PRINT-SELLER'S STORY.

THE night on which my landlord told me his story I had observed him to be in a very unusual mood. When not stirring the fire he was puffing his tobacco at a great pace, as if, like the oracles of old, he sought to enshroud himself in mystery, before delivering himself of some weightier matters than ordinary. But, however he might hide himself from the eye, a quick ear could detect in his voice a something new and strange, as he proceeded with his account of the only love adventure he had gone through in all his life. The case had its peculiarities.

At the corner of a near street was an old-fashioned eating-house, where each day, Sundays excepted, the window steamed with legs of roast pork, fillets of veal, and huge rounds of boiled beef garnished with carrots and supported by suet puddings. This shop had been kept by a very plain, honest old lady for a great many years. The print-seller found it convenient, and it had been his custom to dine and sup there each day and night with equal regularity, until an acquaintance sprang up, and he became a privileged person in the establishment: and instead of sitting with the other customers, he was permitted to take his food in the small back parlour, shut off from the common dining-room by a screen and red curtain—a very snug corner where exactly four persons could sit and enjoy the pleasures of privacy in the very midst, as it were, of the busy throng. Things had gone on in this pleasant way for seven years or more—the print-seller and the honest landlady becoming more and more familiar, until each consulted the other on every subject of the least consequence. The excellent landlady almost considered the customer in the light of a brother, and felt bound to take care of and advise him on all social matters. And it often happened that a chance word dropped by a customer within hearing, or a report of some circumstance in the papers, or a story read from one of the score-and-half of amusing books that formed the coffee-room library, would give rise to discussions on the interesting theme of matrimony: and the suggestive proprietress never allowed a day to pass without advising the print-seller to adopt that state. All she could say, however, on that subject never made the least impression on the collector of prints.

At length it became his turn to tender advice, and impart words of comfort. The hostess had heard of the sudden death in the country of an only brother, for whom she had more than ordinary affection. Her daily guest knew by report all the particulars of this brother, and his family affairs, so that when the news of the good man's death reached the mistress of the dining-room he had his share of the common sorrow. There were the shutters, at least three out of six, to be left up; there was the mourning to make, and a journey to prepare for, for the landlady did not hesitate about the absolute propriety of attending her brother's funeral, and, what was more than all, of taking charge of an orphan daughter, an only child, now left with the neighbours. The brother had long been a widower. The print-seller said and did all in his power to render the calamity as light as possible. A night was spent in arranging plans for the comfort of the orphan, who was henceforth to form one of the inmates of the bar-parlour.

'I expect we shall soon spoil her between us,' said the landlady.

'Poor child!' exclaimed the print-seller, whose pity was at once awakened on behalf of the country maiden.

In little more than a week, the night coach made its appearance at an early hour at the Black Bull, on Holborn Hill, and found the print-seller in waiting: and as the aunt had in the course of a long journey talked very much to her niece about her favourite daily guest, that young lady was fully prepared to treat him as a friend almost before she saw him: and he, in like manner, when he beheld the stranger step from the coach, with her pale face and large eyes so full of sorrow, at once

made up his mind to love her ; but in what character he did not attempt to decide, and hardly dared to think. He had expected to meet a mere child, and he found a young woman of some eighteen years of age, and beautiful beyond description. A few days seemed to put matters in order. The niece proved quite an able assistant to the aunt, and in the hurry of business her grief became in some degree modified : new scenes and new activity alleviating the sadness of her great bereavement. The regular customers showed her great respect, while some of the juniors envied the print-seller his superior privileges as bar-parlour guest. Yet he deserved all the happiness which the society and conversation of the new comer could afford him : for he did everything he could to make her forget her sorrows, or rather to reconcile her to the loss of parents on whom she had doted. He himself had been left an orphan in the first year of his life. He told her so, and she sighed and looked at him with pitying looks. He stifled the feeling which took possession of his breast. He tried to appear indifferent ; and in order not to indulge in tender personal reminiscences, flew to ordinary topics, such as theatres, public buildings, and more especially the grand churches of the metropolis—and went with Jessy (for that was the young lady's name) and her aunt to St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, and one or other church, every succeeding Sunday. In the natural kindness of his heart he devised other attentions. Out of the vast stores of prints which he possessed, he made a handsome album, containing views of countries, and costumes of all nations, and many other subjects, and had it bound in morocco at considerable expense. Being possessed of much information of a

popular kind, he directed his conversation to explanations of the pictures, and thus in the most agreeable manner he combined instruction with amusement. Not to flatter the pupil, she stood in need of some such tutor, for while nature had done so much for her, art had been entirely idle: and beyond the ordinary matters of farm life and village gossip, she had but few ideas. But if Jessy was ignorant, she had a ready way of seizing on the pretty histories which the print-seller repeated to her—or which she found in the quaint volumes left for her perusal; and with equal readiness did she appreciate the kind intentions of her friend and instructor, and, in her own modest, charming, and simple way, repay his kindness by looks more eloquent than words, and by words more expressive than any which the books she read contained: at least, so thought the infatuated seller of engravings.

This intimacy between the solitary man and the unsophisticated girl increased day by day, and yet it was long before particular notice was taken of its extent and importance by those concerned. Jessy was no sooner out of mourning than she might be seen walking beneath the dome of St. Paul's, wearing a tasteful and costly shawl which her aunt's guest had presented to her on her nineteenth birthday, and the little hand which hid itself beneath that shawl clasped a tiny prayer-book of a most rare order, which even a duchess might have carried. This also came from the courtly presenter of the shawl. Flowers of the sweetest fragrance, early violets, and primroses were frequently seen in the little parlour: the print-seller was ever an early visitor at Covent Garden when flowers were in season. All this was very charming, be-

cause no harm was thought or intended. But where was it all to end? A year passed by, and the sympathetic, grave man saw only grace and sweetness in the orphan who had come to drive away the evil spirits that had vexed his heart so long. Dreary languor no longer oppressed him nor filled his house with grim and shadowy forms. The days were long when he saw not Jessie. The moments flew by when he sat by her side in the little parlour, which was nightly. All traces of grief had now left Jessie's face. When evening came she reached out her books and trinkets to gaze upon them for the hundredth time. All this while no explanation was either asked or desired, or felt to be necessary. At length the customers took the delicate subject up, and at the remoter tables the print-seller and his attentions to the niece became the usual topic of conversation among the workmen of a type-foundry hard by. The men all agreed that the attentive print-seller was all that could be desired, saving that he was a trifle too advanced in years. On the latter point there could be no manner of doubt. One of the observers took upon himself to favour the mistress of the establishment with his opinion on the subject. The good woman was several days before the man's meaning came into her head, and, when she did come to understand to what the mechanic's remarks referred, she laughed 'till she was ready to drop,'—so absurd seemed the idea to her in her simplicity. 'You need not seem so astonished,' observed the officious mechanic, 'for I could name half a dozen instances in which older men, artists, doctors, and barristers, have persuaded young girls with large fortunes to marry them.'

Let it not be supposed that the print-seller himself

was innocent of all thoughts on this subject of conversation in the coffee-room. On the contrary, he spent hours, during which he should have slept, in debating the question over and over again. He knew not what to do. He was too far removed from a conceited coxcomb to think for a moment that he was all that a young and beautiful girl could hope for in a husband. But how should he act? He was in a dilemma. Withdraw himself by degrees, said reason and prudence. He began to do so. The first week of this resolve he missed dining with Jessy once. What was the consequence? He had to stay an hour later at night to make up for his mid-day neglect. He made many attempts in this way, and as often failed. The moments were counted; and had he stayed from the bar-parlour one entire day, there would have been little peace in the house.

The customers, who had little else there to engage their attention, made the interesting couple their sole study, and, clever as they were, they were all deceived in the conclusion at which they arrived, which was that the print-seller wanted to break the engagement, that Jessy would not permit him to do so, and that he was an idiot to refuse so beautiful a creature for a wife: and that if she preferred a husband so much older than herself, why, that was her affair, not his. The result was that the poor print-seller, as he reflected upon the matter from his own point of sight, found himself once more given over to sad, perplexing thoughts and serious doubts. He clearly could not reduce the number of his days, but he would try to feel jocund and cheerful: he would by comforts, nay, even by luxuries, do much to make his home a happy one. Perhaps he reflected

broadly on the theme of unequal marriages. This life is full of difficulties at every step. How many stumble for lack of experience which only years can give: and were it not wise, therefore, for a young and inexperienced girl like Jessy, for instance, to look up to one ripe in years and wealthy in experience, rather than risk her precious life in the keeping of one as young and as little acquainted with real life as herself? But love, passion, reason, and prudence are seldom united. His reflections did not satisfy himself. They seemed suggested by selfishness, a feeling which found little favour in his eyes. What was he to do? That Jessy evidently loved him to distraction was commonly believed in the room. Her mature suitor was compelled to believe so himself. Again, what was he to do? He took to novel reading, and lighted on some German works which had for their subject the very state of mind in which he found himself. What will Germans not do? Those German writers made it appear that unequal marriages were greatly to be preferred: and, so far from wondering that blooming maidens gave the preference to their seniors, they wondered how any girls of sense and refinement could for a moment permit themselves to be deluded by the auburn locks and thoughtless levity of mere boys. The print-seller read these stories, but failed to be convinced by them. He had too much modesty to lay these highly-coloured novels in the way of Jessy, and when he tried to broach the subject in his own way he failed to make himself understood. His perplexities became greater than ever: for he reflected that, by abandoning Jessy, whom he loved to distraction, he might never know a moment's happiness again; and at the same time the

girl whom he loved, and who undoubtedly loved him, would equally become unhappy, then his imaginary devotion to duty would really be a desertion, a folly, or a crime. He decided that he would make up his mind and at once propose and marry Jessy. With this resolve he collected his scattered property, did up his house to make it worthy of its new occupant, and by degrees fortified himself to bear the brunt of all those meddling reflections and comments which no doubt might, and in all probability would, be made upon his wedding-day.

When everything was complete, his resolve fixed, and his heart involved beyond redemption, he accidentally discovered that Jessy had never loved, never dreamed of loving him, in any other light than as she had loved her own dear parent. He had decided to speak to her on the Friday, but, happening to go suddenly into supper on the previous night, he found cause to lay aside his intentions. He had entered the dining-room, after it was closed to ordinary patrons, and shut the door, when he overheard her on whom he doted speaking in a most feeling and somewhat excited manner. The last words of Jessy fell upon his astonished ear. 'I know,' she cried, 'that I ought to be happy and thankful too, for if heaven took from me father and mother, and left me an orphan, God gave me another mother in you, my dear aunt, and a father in my dear Mr. Dexter'; saying which, and overcome by her filial emotions, she threw her arms round the print-seller's neck, and kissed him for the first time during all the period of their acquaintance.

I asked the print-seller what became of Jessy, as he concluded his narrative, when he informed me that the fat wife of the fat baker next door was the same person;

that she was perfectly happy, and that she had never surmised that he, the print-seller, had ever loved her save in the light of a father.

CHAPTER L.

THE POET.

AMONG the people who came to look over the print-seller's folios was a tall, thin man, who, on the strength of having made a couple of tolerable ballads in his youth, or rather in his boyhood, had gone on song-making all his life, and so beggared himself. This individual had very fine eyes, of which he was so vain that, though past sixty years of age, he used to practise languishing airs before his looking-glass, and persuade himself that he had a way of his own perfectly irresistible. He was, to use his own words, a reverent admirer of the old painters, and talked much of 'Guido's divine airs,' of 'Raphael's killing sweetness' and 'Correggio's melting tenderness.' When he could scrape together a few pounds, instead of paying vulgar tradesmen, he would speculate on an old picture. It was his practice day by day to poke about in dirty brokers' shops in search of hidden gems; and in order that he should not be disappointed, the dealers would hide their daubs where he was likely to hunt. Thus one day our poetical searcher found what he called a 'Carlo Dolci' in a coal shed, and on another occasion a 'Francesca Mola' in a cellar among old iron-work. After, in this way, securing his

gem, he would go straight to the print-seller's to see if it had been engraved, and so hunt among the folios and talk a tiresome amount of nonsense.

The print-seller, as I have said, was a kind man, and knew not how to refuse. Out of gratitude to my host, I made a point of attending to the poet, and by this means we became acquainted. It said something for my constitution and disposition that I was able to endure him. There was no stopping his tongue, no putting him off. When I was ready to drop with fatigue he had the impression that I was in ecstasies with the beauty of his language, and when I looked imploringly up into his face he fancied I was admiring his eyes.

One day, in order further to relieve the master of the shop of his enemy the poet, I took him up to my studio, where he soon made himself at home, sometimes bringing me his presumed old masters for me to operate upon. He was delighted with me, and promised to do for me what he had failed to do for himself, namely, make my fortune. He pronounced me a genius of the highest order, and behaved in all respects like a prince, saving only that he paid me in words instead of coin. After a while, he expressed a wish that I should occupy chambers in his house, as he called it, and, as I was honourably desirous of leaving the print-seller's, I accepted the proposal and moved. I was anxious to leave the print-seller on any pretext, because I foresaw that the longer I remained with him the deeper I should become indebted to him, for his generosity was inexhaustible. I felt ashamed of imposing upon him. Up to this time I had managed, by strict frugality, to keep solvent, but this had been done by some of my prints

and books changing hands. I had caused Madame Mitchel to send those up deposited with her on my leaving home in pursuit of the Bezzas. The print-seller, appreciating my feelings, accepted the choicest specimens of books and prints as security for so much rent due; and I took up my abode with the poet in a large, gloomy house, in the neighbourhood of the Garrick Club, Covent Garden, with a view to restore his 'collection of paintings.'

At intervals my metrical patron was a most sensible man, bargained in a business-like way to find me food, and give me five shillings a day for my services. A large empty chamber, immediately over his rooms, I engaged for five shillings a week, as a sleeping apartment, and he chose that I should manipulate on the pictures in his own rooms, where he could watch the progress of renovation. The poet's wife was a very homely sort of woman, very little younger than himself, and unfortunately for her, like him, not overburdened with practical sense. From her I learned the nature of the poet's ordinary occupation. Being an excellent classical scholar, he was employed in one of the chief printing-offices as reader, and he might have lived handsomely on the fruits of his attainments, but for his versifying and picture-collecting, which had been the cause of his being driven from various lodging-houses, from his lack of means to pay his way in the world. For some time the poet's table was well supplied, and hardly a day passed without some fresh luxury of the season being sent in. His employment was irregular, and often left him leisure, and he would stay within doors for whole days, sitting at my back or reclining

upon a sofa, talking about the old masters without intermission. Speaking of his verses, he informed me that he seldom composed by day, that inspiration commonly seized him about midnight, and that his happier rhymes were commonly committed to paper by the light of the lamp. This appeared to be true, for one morning, according to custom, on descending into his sitting-room, which had been turned into a studio, I found that, notwithstanding that the sun had risen some two or three hours, the room, contrary to custom, was still in total darkness. I went straight to unbar the shutters, and, having let in the light, I was not a little surprised to behold the gaunt poet in his night-shirt, standing against the table (on which stood an expiring lamp), pen in hand, apparently in a dream. I was too startled to move or speak for the moment, but, recovering myself, I accosted him, when he placed his finger to his lip, as if to enjoin silence; and thus he remained buried in thought—inspiration he called it. At length the pen came into requisition, and for a short period was actively employed, and apparently to my employer's entire satisfaction; for when he ceased writing he snatched up the paper, and eyed it with an unmistakable expression of rapture. I was curious to know what subject had engaged him so earnestly, and ventured to ask him, when, to my utter amazement, he turned, and in a strange, solemn voice, answered, 'Laura Bezza,' and then, with a couple of strides, passed like an apparition into the adjoining room to complete his interrupted slumbers.

Had I been disposed to make a confidant of the poet he was always so much absorbed in his songs and

pictures, and talked so incessantly, that he left me no opportunity ; hence my amazement on my hearing him pronounce the name of one whose image was ever in my memory. I could hardly resist following him to ask what he knew of Laura. I conjectured many things, but only the more to feel the whole a mystery.

Possibly the Bezzas were known to my eccentric employer. I determined to ask him for an explanation the moment that he made his appearance. When he did return, he bore a picture in his hand on which I had been engaged the day before. It was the portrait of a young girl, which by a stretch of fancy I had made to look somewhat like Laura. The poet placed it on the easel, and, unfolding a paper, proceeded to read the verses he had produced, and on which he was employed when disturbed by my intrusion. He read the title, 'Laura Bezza,' and then the rhymes. They were the most silly I had ever heard. 'But the title—how did you come by the title, sir?' I asked, with manifest interest. He pointed to the portrait—the whole matter was explained. While in a fit of abstraction, I had inadvertently written 'Laura Bezza' on the panel, and forgotten to remove it. The poet had taken a fancy to the name, and thereupon composed a song about Venice, and gondoliers, marble palaces, and dancing waves, dark eyes, warbling lutes, Giorgione and Titian.

CHAPTER LI.

THE LODGING-HOUSE.

ABOUT once in three years, the poet contrived to get so far behind with his landlord as to make an adjustment of accounts, or change of residence, indispensable, and soon after my engagement began, the period for this arrangement came round. His great concern on these occasions, was to secure his manuscripts, and which, on the manifestation of the final danger, he, until he could bring about a settlement, ingeniously stowed away in his hat or umbrella, and conveyed them to a place of greater safety.

The furniture of my sleeping apartment was doomed with the rest, but, happily, I had saved sufficient money to buy the mattress, bed-clothes, one table, and a chair, and with these I began house-keeping on my own account. To this end, also, I engaged the services of a very needy charwoman, who occupied a cellar at the back of the mansion, which, as I have said, was most spacious. The principal staircase, on which I resided, would admit of three persons ascending it abreast. The balusters were quaintly formed, and the panels ornamented with beautiful scroll-work. I was told that another staircase existed, scarcely less spacious, but of a somewhat plainer character. Each floor consisted of a suite of four rooms. About a dozen families lived under the entire roof, more or less unknown to each other, and, with the exception of my poor charwoman, altogether unknown to myself. I was curious enough to question my attendant about

the families on my own floor, and learned that an elderly woman and her daughter lived in the room adjoining, and that a foreign gentleman and his daughter rented three rooms in one part of the house. I was struck by the fact that these foreigners consisted of a gentleman and his daughter, but, as the charwoman described them as French, I troubled no further about them. My income now was so reduced that, after paying my rent, I had barely means of support, and was compelled to part with the whole of my carving tools, which I had retained for practice, both in wood and stone. I sold them, a few at a time, to the keeper of a second-hand shop in the neighbourhood. At length, by frequent application among the small brokers, I got to be a little known, and after a few weeks, a dealer gave me an old picture to renovate. This man honestly paid me on the completion of the work, and recommended me to another small trader, like himself; and thus, by degrees, I made a connection. At intervals I made copies of small prints, and sold them for a few shillings apiece, and now and then, carried a small landscape, or piece of still-life, to an auction mart which did business chiefly in pictures. Often, when no biddings had been made for my productions, the auctioneer, after trying them in two or three successive sales, would bring a bill against me for more than the pictures were worth, as things went. The charwoman who waited upon me evidently entertained no very exalted idea of my resources. All my expedients to veil the real state of things did not succeed with her, and, with the best of intentions no doubt, she communicated her impressions to the antiquated occupant of the next room, and thus brought about the least endurable

of my annoyances. This old woman had a loud bass voice, was of a talkative turn, and so far silly as not always to know what she was talking about. Without paying much attention to her disjointed sentences, I could often make out that the drift of her interminable talk nearly always related to the private affairs of some one known to her, and frequently to people living in the same house. At length my turn came round. She spoke of me as the artist in the next room, or as the poor young man, or the poor gentleman, as her descriptive powers varied. In vain the daughter tried to arrest the mother's garrulity. The old lady's chief concern was, that she had no place, no sitting-room, into which to invite me. She grew more concerned for me day by day. If I was silent, as was my wont, she fancied that I might have died—if I made a noise, that I was taken ill—if I coughed, that I was gone into a consumption. I forbade the charwoman to speak of me, but my injunctions were of no avail. I continued the favourite theme with my near neighbour.

Over the old lady lived a couple of shoemakers, who likewise troubled themselves much with the concerns of their fellow-lodgers. They exerted themselves in the sarcastic line. They had evidently both seen and heard of the painter below. 'Poor devil,' was one of their remarks. One of them kept company with the daughter of the old lady with the bass voice, and it was through this that I came to know of the style they employed when speaking of me. To do the old lady justice, she was filled with indignation at their insolence. The stoop had not left me, which, as I have previously stated, I at one time acquired, which led these sarcastic cordwainers

to say that 'my head made its appearance round a corner some ten minutes sooner than the rest of my body.' My boots had acquired the infirmity to run down on one side, right and left, which made the rascals to remark that my boots could not agree, and that while one wished to walk up one side the street the other insisted upon going up the opposite side. Something, one day, in the appearance of my garments was made by them an occasion to report a general defect of buttons and recourse to primitive fastenings. On this point the would-be wags observed that I could not dress myself without a ball of string, nor undress without a knife. Touching my attenuated appearance, which a faulty commissariat is apt to engender, the rogues suggested that, in venturing out in the wind, it would be as well if I carried a bag with me, so that in the event of my being blown into bits, which would be pretty sure to be the case, the bag would be useful into which to convey the collected fragments to my friends, that is, if I had any friends.

CHAPTER LII.

THE COBBLER'S PLOT.

IN process of time the tones of the old lady's voice became less harsh, which improvement I learned from her repeated assertion was owing to the constant use of stewed onions. It was an advantage to learn indirectly that she frequently employed that relishing article of diet. Day by day new topics of discourse came up in which I

and my affairs were more or less a feature of interest. One morning the old lady became more animated than ordinary in my defence against some charge which my enemies above had made against me, as it turned out by way of practical joke ; but the particulars of which did not reach my ears, for the daughter was evidently suppressing the mother's voice, from the stifled indistinctness which began to affect the old lady's utterance. The subject had something to do with jealousy and revenge and the tipsy cobbler's wife who lived in the attic.

My gratuitous tormentors had started a report, the direct purport of which I could not glean from the disjointed utterances made in my neighbours' room. The fact is, the visible decay of my means had proceeded so far that I had become the victim of a practical joke.

On the evening following my incidental knowledge of this plot I was sitting musingly over a handful of warm cinders for which I had raked and re-raked the ashes of the grate half a dozen times over. I was sitting with my back partly to the door which led into my room. The sun had set, but the sky still reflected a chilly, dismal glare and lit up my face. I was pondering upon what I should do on the morrow ; I had hoped against hope. Laura, alas ! I had almost grown afraid to inquire after. My garments had begun to illustrate my fortune ; my feet had already excited notice ; the very mice had ceased to visit my cupboard. I had gone down lower and lower. Pride had prompted me to conceal, even to deny, my needs to the few who would instantly have served me, until I had no longer the heart to make

known my wants. As I still sat by the cheerless grate, for by this time the fire had quite gone out, I was suddenly startled by a loud noise on the stairs. I had barely recovered the shock, when my door was thrown open and a dark form came rushing across the room. I had not attempted to rise, and, in a sort of stupor, into which my previous reflections had thrown me, I gazed on the intruder with the same fixed look I had worn while watching the last glimmering light in the sky. The man—for the gloom was not so great but one could see that the intruder was a man—stood confronting me, exclaiming in a threatening, husky, excited, inebriated, voice, ‘Where’s the painter? Bring a light; I will kill him’; and more to the same effect. Still I moved not, understood not the meaning of this outrage. At last, tired with imprecation, the ruffian laid his hands upon me. In an instant I was aroused. I rushed upon my assailant, and, with a fury and an energy that I knew not that I possessed, I shook him off. By this time the house was in an uproar, for the old lady in the next room had screamed ‘Murder’ at the top of her very effective voice: and a crowd of lodgers came rushing in to learn what was the matter, and, as I thought, to spy out my beggarly condition. Then it was that I discovered who had been my assailant. It was the drunken, jealous cobbler, whom his mischievous friends had thus excited. Drunk as he was when the lights were brought, a glance seemed to suffice to convince him that he had been deceived. ‘It is a lie; I have been deceived,’ he exclaimed, as he looked into my face. I returned not his glance and but little heeded his words. My eyes were riveted on the curious assemblage who now filled the

apartment; I could not be deceived in two persons who were gazing at me. They were Signor Bezza and Laura.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE ITALIAN'S FIRESIDE.

SIGNOR BEZZA was the first to speak. I rose from my seat as he approached me with open arms and astonishment pictured in his face. He seized me with both hands, and glanced around the room; and again at me. I seemed to read his thoughts in his face. 'You, my old friend, whom I have known and loved, living here in penury, and I all the time in the same house living in affluence.' 'Here, Laura, come,' he exclaimed aloud; 'here is our good friend found at last. Neighbours,' he added, 'I know not to what chance I am indebted for this discovery, but I am happy in having found this gentleman whom I had long lost and mourned. Strange that he should all this time be living under the same roof with me, and I not know it. Passing strange; I have been more than anxious in seeking my friend, because I have in my keeping a sum of money belonging to him, and which, from the reports which have been spread among you, you may well judge, will be more than welcome to him at this time. Neighbours, leave us, I pray you, to settle our little affairs together, and make our mutual explanations. To-morrow, I promise you, will put a very different face upon this matter than at this moment it wears.'

These words had the effect for which they were so well calculated. The lodgers retired, and I followed Signor Bezza and Laura to their side of the house, where cheerfulness and plenty prevailed. The room into which I was ushered was even luxuriously furnished, the table sumptuously spread. Fire and lamp lent warmth and light. A sudden change came over me. I felt like one newly risen from the dead, yet with the graveclothes still hanging about him.

The Italian was not only a genius in the art of modelling, he was also too refined a gentleman to see that I was not at ease, or to take the least notice of my garb. One might have sworn that he did not perceive any change in my outward aspect. When once by his fire-side, the look of wonder was gone, and all his wonted ease and old manner returned. But what shall I say of Laura? She seemed to have treasured up all the wealth of her affectionate nature into one huge hoard, in order that when she found me she might astonish me by its abundance. Perhaps, had she found me in affluence, I might, in turn, have found her a riddle difficult to read—cold, haughty, distant, reserved; but now her every look proclaimed unconcealed gladness. Her silence, for she said little, was more eloquent than words, for her words would never have told her kind thoughts in half their fulness. Her face, so symmetrical, changed its expression every minute. First there was pleasure for the present, then sorrow for the past, for she had, like her father, comprehended my late history at a glance and struggled to hide from me her real affliction at the thought of what I might have undergone. For awhile she neglected her father, and made my wants her sole

study, and then, remembering, she flew to her parent to make amends for her unintentional inattention.

After dinner the Signor produced a bottle of choice, delicate Italian wine, and some cigarettes of Laura's own making, as he told me. By degrees the night wore on, and the Signor, according to custom, called for his Dante—his never-failing solace ; and Laura and I had opportunity to tell our own stories to one another in our own way.

CHAPTER LIV.

EXPLANATIONS AND PROJECTS.

THE morning after my happy discovery of the Italians the Signor presented himself in my dreary apartment, with the express view of talking over the past and the future. He began by assuring me that he had remained awake all night reflecting upon the best course to be taken for the welfare of his child and my happiness. He then astonished me by a piece of information respecting old Lazarus, which was altogether opposed to my experiences of that individual. He assured me that he had been much indebted to the Jew—that it was by his assistance he had made his way to London—that he had received many important commissions from him since, and that, in fact, old Lazarus had proved a good patron to him. Furthermore, he described the Hebrew as very wealthy, having establishments on the continent, and particularly one at the Hague : that old Lazarus took a special interest in my welfare, and that it was to

him I in some degree stood indebted for a sum of money which had been sent by Madame Mitchel, while on her death-bed, to be equally divided between Laura and myself. In verification of the latter circumstance, the Signor handed me fifty pounds, in the name of Madame Mitchel, and ten pounds, which, as I have stated, I left with that kind landlady when I set out with old Lazarus on my search after the Italians. But scarcely had I time to take heart at this unexpected piece of fortune, when the Signor dissipated my joy by remarking that he was about to leave England and take his daughter with him. He was, he said, acquainted with my unfortunate career in the metropolis, and thought none the worse of me for my want of success ; only that he must object to my marriage with Laura, until I should succeed in persuading Fortune to be more kind to me than she had been hitherto. ‘You English,’ he observed, ‘are most thoughtless in often rushing into marriage with little means to support that state when inevitable expenses arise. Single, you do very well ; being able to live, so you say, on five shillings a week ; but when married, you are ready to confess that five shillings a day is little enough. When I hear people assert, as only English people do assert, that the married is no more expensive than the single state, and that children involve no additional expense—that it takes no more to fill six mouths than two—why, I confess that I am not convinced by what I hear. Anyhow, my mind is made up ; Laura will never have my consent to marry any one save yourself, and she will not have that until you are established in something like a permanent condition of prosperity. Meanwhile, perhaps it is desirable that we part. Of

your success, of which I have now no doubt, I shall hear through our friend Lazarus, who, as I have said, has your interest at heart, as he has long had mine.'

At these words of the Signor's I was speechless, and knew not what to say, for I had not thought to part from Laura in this manner, and so suddenly too. The Signor of course guessed my thoughts, for he could not fail to perceive the effect the determination he had announced had upon me.

'You have one fault,' he proceeded; 'you are proud beyond measure; in proof of which I may instance your having immured yourself in the way that you have when all the time you had friends like the good print-seller, who is every inch a gentleman, and who would have known how to serve you in a way you could have permitted. Then there was my friend Altoviti, who would have opened his large heart, had he known of your necessities. For my friend Lazarus, perhaps, I cannot say quite so much; but of this I am sure, that the harshness he displayed was in part put on to try your patience and endurance, to which qualities in any man he will in the end bow down.'

I was about to reply to this last remark of Signor Bezza's touching my want of patience and endurance, when he cut me short, saying that the Jew had had proof in abundance that I was not deficient in these respects, and, but for the untoward incident which separated me from the Hebrew, I should have had evidence of what Bezza had asserted as to the interest which old Lazarus had in my welfare.

'But you will permit me to see Laura again before we part?' I asked.

‘It is impossible. I have already removed her from this house, where I have lingered but too long. I have commissions abroad which may not be neglected. Go, replenish yourself with dress and tools. Call on old Lazarus. You owe him thanks, and, if I mistake not, he will be most glad to see you, although he may not discover the state of his feelings. He and I have arranged an engagement for you, which will gratify you, he having held back a commission which it rests with you to make remunerative. It is in the way of picture restoration. The work is ready, it has only waited,’ he added with that encouraging flattery an Italian can so gracefully employ, ‘a Robert Dalby to do it. Addio! you have my blessing, you have my love—you have Laura’s. Take my advice, and all will end well; and, according to your greatest bard, “All’s well that ends well.”’

CHAPTER LV.

A FORTUNATE COMMISSION.

SOME days after the interview I had with Signor Bezza I was on my way, in company with old Lazarus, to the residence of a gentleman of great wealth, an ex-governor and West Indian planter. The object of our visit was made known to me as we went along. The ex-governor had made more money than he knew what to do with, was filling his house with paintings of all kinds, and wanted some one to put them in order. The Jew, being aware of this, had considerably recommended me

for the task. So far the Signor's words were verified, and Lazarus had, indeed, rendered me a service unasked.

The mansion was situated in a retired corner of a park, some three miles out of town. The grounds had in part been replanted by their present wealthy owner, who, feeling that he had not many years to live, had transplanted trees already arrived at maturity, and with an eye to the present and the picturesque, had in a few years produced the effects of a century's growth. He had thrown up embankments and covered them with underwood, imparting to the scene all the charms of wildness and disorder. Immediately in front of the house, on the contrary, all that was fair and smooth met the eye. A small lake, clear as a mirror, reflected gay parterres and lawns and level walks : while in adjoining meadows water-fowls abounded, lending animation to a pleasant stream ; and ponds, well margined with flags and rushes, afforded refuge for carp and tench. The interior of the mansion was in keeping with the grounds around. Shrubs and flowers filled every spare nook, and ranged about upon the tessellated pavement of the hall they mingled their variegated foliage with graceful sculptured forms.

The principal personage at this enchanting residence, next to the proprietor, was an aged brother, who came forth to meet us at the porch. Our arrival had been duly announced by Sambo, a woolly-headed porter, who salaamed in his best manner on receiving our names. The brother led us into the presence of the owner, who received us with Oriental breeding. We were invited to partake of refreshment, which numerous servants sup-

plied with noiseless attentions. Our wealthy host barely noticed the repast, except to press some particular dish upon my notice, excusing his own want of appetite by saying that at my years he could eat a whole sheep. The Jew needed no pressing, and talked very animatedly when he had partaken of a little wine. I learned from passing remarks that Signor Bezza had often been a guest in the same house, and that old Lazarus had imparted to the ex-governor some particulars of my life. I was wise enough to leave to my Hebrew friend the task of making terms for me, feeling sure that he knew better than myself the value of services which he had had so many opportunities of appraising. The result far exceeded my anticipations; and with one of those sanguine transitions of feeling, which only the young familiar with vicissitudes make, I already fancied myself a rich man.

On our way back, the Jew did not forget to congratulate me on my good fortune, without, however, taking any credit to himself, as he well might have done, for his part in the business. I did not fail, however, to express my obligations for the unexpected service he had done me. 'At the table of this retired Indian planter,' Lazarus observed, 'you will meet with scores of wealthy collectors of art-relics, and a connexion valuable to you will be made in time. Altoviti assures me that you are well versed in the principles of art. He says he would trust you with the restoration of a Raphael. I ought to have kept you to myself,' added the Jew, with a touch of his natural manner.

Nothing could be pleasanter than the execution of my engagement, to renovate the wealthy planter's

pictures. The consciousness of gain, and the allurements of its consequences on my prospects, made the time pass rapidly, which otherwise might have appeared long. At length, my work over, old Lazarus startled and interested me by proposing that I should accompany him on a journey of business to Holland. Was my mysterious friend about to discover to me some of his business connexions, or show me his importance in some way? I could not understand it. However, Holland was a country full of interest for me, in connection with art; but I confess that I was chiefly attracted by the hope of joining the Bezzas, for the Jew had more than once hinted that Laura and her father had, to use an expression of the Jew's, 'favoured that country with their presence.'

CHAPTER LVI.

A JOURNEY TO HOLLAND.

GREAT was my joy when, after many delays, on one rainy morning in November, I and my friendly tormentor took passage for Rotterdam. My travelling companion had a different costume for every class of business in which he engaged. When selling, he looked very grand with jewellery; when buying, he appeared poverty-stricken and chapfallen. On setting out for Holland, he presented himself in a shabby suit of fustian; and carried over his shoulder a sack; he was, to all appearance, the poorest person on board the vessel. To be in keeping with his forlorn aspect, we took deck passages,

in common with a large number of German drovers, who had brought cattle to England, and were then on their way home. Little thought that motley array of passengers that my shabby acquaintance carried about him wealth enough to buy the vessel in which we were embarked. Yet such was the fact.

Unaccustomed to sea life, it was not long before I lay prostrate upon a heap of chain and rope, near the middle of the deck, whence, when night set in, the captain kindly ordered me to be carried below. I had sufficient consciousness remaining to buy some brandy of the steward, which so far restored my strength that I began to look about me, by the light of a dimly-burning lamp, when the first object that met my gaze was the Jew, crouching down in the corner like a dog. His proper place, of course, was like mine, upon deck ; but, disliking salt water, he had slunk down unperceived to the snug place where I beheld him. I was about to call out to him, when he enjoined silence ; he had no wish to pay four shillings fare in addition to what he had paid. It was a rainy, boisterous night, so much so that the captain's heart was moved for the poor drovers, and he permitted them, also, to descend for shelter. They came below half drowned. There was only standing room, and, as they all smoked enormous pipes, the place became suffocating. What with the odour of their vile tobacco and greasy steaming garments, I began to wish that the good captain had allowed me to perish on deck, or that he had thrown me overboard. And yet amid the smother and confusion (they all appeared to be dancing) I could now and then see old Lazarus tempting the poor fellows with his trinkets. He came to my side

as if to comfort me, but altered his mind and drank the little brandy I had left : he had to loosen my fingers one by one to get it from my miserable clutch. In return for this untimely freedom he stooped down and whispered in my ear that I should soon behold the Signor and Laura, rightly calculating that this piece of news would obliterate all thoughts of the little transaction from which I had just suffered. The Jew had the art of making even the facts of his ordinary knowledge bring him in something.

Morning, which seemed as though it would never come, arrived at last, and found us in sight of land. Smooth water announced our entrance into the broad river, when I went up on deck, not much refreshed, but very hungry, after that terrible night in the hold. In the course of the morning I ordered some coffee for my breakfast. The Jew expressed his amazement at so great a piece of extravagance on my part, and, in order not to lay himself open to the charge of inconsistency, he partook of my loaf and coffee, and forgot to pay his part of the reckoning, which was very characteristic of him, and, as it appeared to me then, quite of a piece with his character all through. Arriving at a shallow part of the river, we had the misfortune to run aground : whereupon the captain made the following announcement :—‘ We shall stay where we are, gentlemen, for about fourteen hours. Those who happen to be in a hurry can land here and walk to Dort, whence they can go in a barge to Rotterdam. That’s all I have to say.’

Strange enough, old Lazarus was the only individual who chose to land. He had made arrangements to sup

in Rotterdam that night, and punctuality was one of his virtues.

A miserable-looking wretch, who had by means of stakes, hurdles, stones, and faggots, rescued a strip of land from the river, came alongside in his boat, and landed us on his humble quay, where we sank up to our knees in soft mud. Touched by the abject looks of the boatman, I opened my purse and gave him a shilling, being the smallest silver coin I had.

‘God of Abram! was ever there such waste?’ screamed the Jew. Instead of being thankful, however, the poor boatman looked more abject than before, and, holding the shilling in the palm of his hand, declared, as my companion informed me, that he would prefer the smallest coin of his own country to that which I had given him. The Jew promptly took him at his word, and made an exchange with him of another piece of silver weighing certainly much less than the one I had given the Dutchman.

Our way lay along an apparently interminable straight path, fringed on either side with stunted willows, all of the same age, shape, and height. On the right was a vast marsh or bog; on the left some smooth even meadows, of a velvet-like softness, cut into square pieces, and intersected by narrow ditches. The morning sky, purified by a strong sea breeze, had worn a silvery brightness, but as the day wore away, a dense fog suddenly sprang up from the fens and marshes, which, mingling with the warm sunbeams, yielded an intense radiance, blending in broad luminous bars tints of amber, saffron, and gold. In these very meadows Albert Cuyp found the subjects of his rich and glowing pencil. It was

milking time, and fat, ruddy girls, bedizened with all manner of strange trinkets in the form of jewellery, passed to and fro carrying large brass vessels on their heads. My friend stopped and managed to sell them a portion of the more tawdry articles of merchandise which he carried about with him. I much enjoyed some of the sweet milk which they proffered us, and regretted that my inexplicable and economical companion prevented my paying for it. We came to a roadside inn, and did a little more business. An English gentleman, one of our fellow-passengers, who had, somehow, also made his way forward, came up, and engaged the Jew as an interpreter. My friend here also contrived to make a profit of the stranger's necessities by changing a sovereign for him at a tolerably good discount. Wherever my friend went he had an eye to business. Taking a barge at Dort, we ran into the mud of Rotterdam about midnight, and, having left the adventurous Englishman at an hotel, where the Jew exacted a small commission for introducing him, we crossed over about forty bridges, and arrived without further hindrance at the Jew's paternal home. We had hit the time to a minute. The widow Lazarus was expecting her son, and was actually boiling a large carp for his supper. She had not beheld her most amiable offspring for a year, yet she displayed no very great excitement. In fact, she hardly raised her eyes as we entered the dim room. A few guttural sounds escaped her aged lips during the demolition of the carp, which my friend almost consumed without assistance on my part.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE JEW DISCOVERS NEW FEATURES OF CHARACTER.

‘WELL, my dear young friend, what are your plans this morning?’ exclaimed old Lazarus, as rising from my bed my eyes beheld, through the dull casement of the widow’s house, a dingy fragment of the bustling city of Rotterdam.

‘I have something in your way, my friend,’ continued the Jew, without waiting for my answer, ‘about which I wish to consult you. Here are catalogues of some fine paintings, at an ancient mansion near the Hague, which are to be sold to-morrow and the following day. While breakfast is preparing we will con them over. I have the only two catalogues which reached London. I secured them both from the agent there, in order that the thing might not become known. I will take you to see the paintings, for I mean to buy largely, and shall be glad of your advice. You understand me?’

‘Certainly; you want my opinion with respect to the pictures you ought to purchase, and the prices you ought to give for them.’

‘That is very much like what I mean; you are very near the mark.’

‘But tell me, where is Signor Bezza?’ I asked, for this was a point upon which the skilful speculator had volunteered me no further information.

‘Not so fast, my impetuous young friend. You will see that gentleman in good time, never fear me. Business before pleasure.’

I here ventured to remind my imperious friend that I had tasted very little pleasure since I had known him, whereupon he abruptly stopped me, and, putting on an injured look, told me that I wronged him ; that but for me he might have done better than he had ; that the Signor was really living at the Hague, whither he would take me, and that he had planned his morrow's visit to that place partly on my account. To this I made answer that he must excuse me if I had expressed some anxiety about the Signor and his daughter, and added that my confidence in his promises was in no way diminished, and that I would still be ruled by him in all things. I uttered these words in all sincerity, for, indeed, spite of his capriciousness and meanness, there was a power of fascination in old Lazarus to which I irresistibly succumbed. Apparently flattered by my earnest assurance of undiminished confidence, he replied, saying that 'I might with some reason charge him with being slow to fulfil his promises, but, after all was said on that score that could be said, what was the loss of a few years to one of my age? Besides, had I not, during the delay, acquired a large amount of invaluable experience of the world ?

'You may smile,' he continued ; 'you have talent—I do not deny it ; but I can tell you, were I to withdraw my experience and assistance, you might never find Signor Bezza. Why, how stands the case? At this hour you are a rich man ; when you met with the Bezzas in London you were to all intents and purposes a beggar. Formerly you worked hard, and fared anything but sumptuously, I admit ; and you will allow that I have fared but indifferently well myself. It may seem strange

to you ; but I, for my part, prefer this changeful, wandering life to the luxury of palace and chariot. Money I have enough, and more than you suppose : yet, for all I possess, I would not forfeit my word. Not a week has passed since you worked under my roof without my receiving reliable intelligence of the Signor's movements. In fact, he has been nearly all along in my employ, at the Hague. You are one of the last to whom I would act unjustly. I have known you long, before you could well run alone. When on my visits to Madame Mitchel's house, while other children fled affrighted at my presence, you, I well remember it, approached me with confidence, and even with respect. As a boy, during all my dealings with your old master, the carver, you ever treated me with regard : since then you have believed in me, and followed my counsel ; I pray you put your faith in me a little longer.'

My friend having thus unexpectedly expressed himself, he resumed his usual manner, and proposed that we should not go out empty-handed, but exert ourselves to turn a penny by the way. I agreed to assist him, and he forthwith loaded me with a variety of useful commodities, such as street hawkers usually carry, and which the widow, who seemed to enter into all her son's commercial pursuits, had done up into convenient parcels. Having taken a similar quantity himself, we set out on our journey. I was about to question my companion as to the destination of our store of merchandise, when he began howling or crying the various articles for sale, so as to make the long, narrow street ring from end to end. I found that I was hawking for the first time. We had a capital run of business. The Jew, I noticed, took care

to ease his own arms first. At length, just as I was heartily weary, and was thinking of throwing the remains of my stock into the canal, we sold the last lot to a sea-captain, and immediately set out for the place of our destination. Arrived at the old *château* where the paintings were on view prior to sale, we were soon busied with the Tenierses, Boths, Huysums, Wouvermans, Hondekoeters, and Ostades ; scrutinising and pricing such lots as the Jew thought would suit his market : and having brought this operation to a close, my mission, as far as my friend was concerned, was completed.

On leaving the *château*, with the view of retracing our steps to the city of the Hague, the Jew took me by the hand in a friendly manner, familiar and altogether different from his usual habit, and, with a kindness of expression I had thought hardly possible in a face so hard and mercenary, he said :

‘Hitherto, my young friend, you have only known “Old Lazarus” as the dealer, as the driver of hard bargains ; and seeing him only in that capacity, you can hardly have formed a fair estimate of him : you shall see him to-night under another and more generous aspect. The world I regard as a common stage, on which I am content, in its sight, to play the vulgar parts, varying my cast as it suits me betwixt the pedlar, the merchant, and the money-lender. To-night you shall be my guest, and sup with the actor at home.’

As we passed along, he paused on the edge of a canal, where a boor was seated near a tubful of live carp and tench, such as one sees depicted in the kitchen scenes of Snyders ; and, accosting the fisherman, the Jew selected and bargained for four of the largest and fattest tench.

‘Now, my young friend,’ exclaimed my companion, ‘go to your lodgings, attire yourself in your smartest raiment, and in an hour’s time meet me at yonder mansion with the marble portico. Ask no questions of man or woman by the way, but come as I have bidden you, and fail not, as you love Laura Bezza.’

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE JEW’S PLOT.

ON our way to the old *château* where the pictures were on view, prior to their sale, the Jew had stopped at a pleasant little tenement, and engaged lodgings for me. The mistress of the establishment was an Englishwoman who had married early and settled at the Hague, and where, having lost her husband, she had managed by her own industry to rear her family in respectability. Among other accomplishments they all spoke tolerable English, which was fortunate for me. On leaving my friend in the fish-market, I hastened to my lodging, and, not suffering any hindrance in making myself understood, I was the more speedily prepared for my appointment at the house on the quay, with the marble portico. I know not what possessed me, but on this occasion I bestowed more pains in dressing than I remember ever to have taken before. All the time I was engaged at the glass, I could not help reverting to the Jew’s altered demeanour towards me. By some sort of magic he had awakened sensations long dormant within my breast, and rekindled

my earliest and fondest hopes. The stars lit up the cloudless sky as I took my solitary way along the dark canal and over the bridge which led to the mansion the Jew had pointed out, and which, owing to its singularity, could not well be mistaken. I paused at the door, where my ancient friend stood in readiness to receive me. Taking a lamp, he led me into a little office, and, without so much as asking me to be seated, commenced an earnest and animated conversation with a small man bearing the unmistakable characteristics of the Hebrew race.

‘Business before pleasure, as usual, you see,’ cried the Jew, turning to me when the conversation ceased. ‘It was ever my rule. But come,’ he added in his late much-improved manner, ‘now let us go to supper. You have fasted long, and must needs be hungry;’ saying which he conducted me up a flight of stone steps, into a large room furnished in a costly manner. In the centre stood a table, on which were preparations for our repast. Seeing me cast an inquiring glance over the apartment, my host interrupted my curiosity by observing :

‘I am expecting a couple of friends to supper, who, if I mistake not, will prove as agreeable to you as to myself. Before, however, I do myself the pleasure of introducing you, I must inflict upon you a little ceremony, which I am afraid will try your patience. When, however, the brief prelude is over, you will not, I am sure, feel ungrateful to me. Anyhow, it is a trifling fancy of mine, which your good-nature will hardly permit you to mar. You will favour me by remaining in this small chamber,’ pointing to one leading out of that in which we were, ‘and it is my wish that you leave the door ajar.

What I have to say to my friends on their coming I wish you also to hear.'

With these peculiar injunctions, the Jew handed me into a side room, carefully closing the door, leaving only a sufficient opening for the purpose he had specified. I had barely seated myself, when footsteps on the stairs announced approaching guests, whom I immediately knew from the way in which my mysterious friend welcomed them.

'Signor,' he said, 'I am glad to see you and your lovely daughter, and in such good time too. Be seated, I pray, until my repast is in readiness. I know not how it is, Signor, but I never look upon your daughter's handsome face without being reminded of a most noble youth I once met with in Genoa, and about whom, until supper is served, I will tell you a story. Come, if I mistake not, it must be as much as thirty years back. I was myself a mere stripling, some forty years of age or so, but, young as I was, I had the reputation of being trustworthy, so much so that a wealthy uncle, to whom I owed the bread I consumed, was wont to entrust me upon errands of some consequence. On the occasion to which my memory now leads me, I had gone disguised in coarse habiliments to the residence of a titled lady, in order to convey to her a large sum of money in gold, and to receive from her, by way of security, a diamond of huge dimensions and of the first water. Whether it was owing to the greatness of the responsibility, or whether that lady's refulgent charms oppressed my brain, or whether fear of meeting with abuse from the populace, at that time bitter against our race, I cannot now certainly tell; a sort of unconscious-

ness came over me as I left the palace, and in that state I proceeded on my way. Guess my horror when, on awakening from my trance, I discovered that I had dropped the casket of which I had taken charge, and which contained the third largest and best diamond in Europe! At first I stood still, gazing at my hands, doubting my eyes, and questioning whether the treasure was not still in my grasp. Then was I seized with fear and trembling, as though I had an ague fit. Anon, I howled like one demented, and dashed myself against the stones, rent my clothes and tore my hair by handfuls from my head: and all this took place in the centre of Genoa, where I was one of the hated and accursed. In an instant, like the wild waves of the sea which have broken through their bounds, the mob, which my frantic gestures had attracted, rushed upon me, crying out, "Behold, he is mad! Behold, the mad Jew!" There had been some reason in their cries had they stopped there; but like all mobs, knowing neither moderation nor humanity, they beat me with sticks and pelted me with dirt, until I sank down upon the earth. Verily I had died upon the spot but for a handsome youth, who, attracted by the noise, came and beat off my cowardly assailants, and carried me bodily off to a place of safety. Such was my despair at the loss of my jewel, that the death from which I had been rescued had not been altogether unwelcome to me. Indeed, as my noble deliverer sat me down, out of harm's way, I barely thanked him. "What has been the cause of all this?" he asked; whereupon I told him of my misfortune and consequent behaviour in the market-place, and described the size and quality of the jewel I had lost. "God be

praised!" exclaimed my deliverer, "give yourself no more anxiety;" and taking from his vest the very casket I had dropped, he placed it in my hands, and disappeared before I could recover from my joyful surprise, or learn how or where he came to pick up the casket. Years passed on, but I never forgot the image of that noble youth. It haunted me sleeping or waking, until at last I beheld in this maiden the features I had long sought in vain, and found, moreover, in you the self-same man who so generously restored my gem and so bravely preserved my life.'

Signor Bezza, I need hardly say, heard this speech with scarcely less astonishment than myself: but the Jew spoke with so much feeling and volubility that it was impossible for his hearer to reply. I was myself rising from my seat and about to rush forward, but the Jew continued, with increased energy, 'Signor Bezza,' said he, 'I need not remind you of your quarrel with the young Pole at Madame Mitchel's. I had then but recently discovered and identified you as my great friend. It was high time that I made you some return for the gracious service you did me. You will remember how, on that night, I followed in your steps, and how, prompted by my advice and aided by my purse, you came here. It was I who employed you (not without profit to myself certainly) since that hour. This night brings our troubles to a close. Your fortune has improved. See, here are no less than a thousand guilders, which my agent has received from the Burgomaster Delt on account of your last five inimitable statuettes. Receive it from my hands without discount, and make note of the fact. It is the first, it may be the last instance of disinterestedness

on my part in business matters. Stop ! I will just take one per cent. profit, in order to spare *your* feelings and my own at the same time. There, that will do. And now, my young lady, why so dull ? Does not your father's good fortune move you to be happy ? There was, if I mistake not, one who for long years loved you tenderly—one who for you would toil through life without repining—one who, if it were needed to test his love, would, nay, who *has* to my knowledge braved insult and danger and privations for your sake. Behold he is here, shut up like a jewel in a casket.'

For myself, I could scarcely help smiling at finding my kind friend the Jew sticking close to his profession, even in his similes. But the thought was quickly followed by other feelings, as the old man opened wide the door of my room, and led me forward. The effect of this last scene in the Jew's play, I need not say, was most satisfactory.

After we had dried the tears from our eyes—even the Jew was not unmoved—we sat down to supper, during which my now-*venerable* host never ceased to laud my behaviour and my constancy during the time he had known me, and which he said dated back to the period when I first left the cradle—a good-natured testimonial which certainly had the merit of extending over a sufficient period of time. My eulogist, perhaps because the exercise was new to him, went even further, and compared me to the monster diamond he had lost so tragically in the streets of Genoa.



CHAPTER LIX.

AT HOME AT THE HAGUE.

AFTER a short time spent in preparing a home I and Laura were married. The English landlady, with whom I lodged, took the responsibility of the details off our hands, and managed matters so well that no accident happened to mar in the smallest degree the happiness of any one concerned.

Our lives pass pleasantly. The days are often varied by short carriage drives, concluding with a repast at which old Lazarus is sometimes present. We have a pretty, small brick house, faced with white stone, on the road that leads to the sea, and so near that in stormy weather the noise of the swelling waves can be distinctly heard as we sit round the polished stove in common use, and to which I am not altogether reconciled.

We have a pleasant window, to which mirrors are attached in such a manner as to reflect the road up and down, with a distant glimpse of the wide ocean beyond, which is commonly specked with fishing-boats. Occasionally we steal an hour on sunny mornings to stroll on the beach, or into the wood, or the picture gallery, whose walls are covered with masterpieces. But if we have any one more favourite resort than another, it is the wood. We penetrate the intricate lanes formed by the stately trees. It was autumn when we made our first stroll in the wood, and the winds scattered the yellow leaves in showers about our heads and covered the green sward ; and here and there, in quiet nooks, ponds of clear,

bright water glowed like golden basins under the spreading branches. Musicians came into the principal avenue, and especially a blind girl came thither on that particular morning with her harp, and played and sang most tunefully. We are happy; the Signor was never so happy in his life. He spends fewer hours with Dante, and has taken to the cultivation of tulips for a pastime. He has plenty to do in making designs for jewellery, plate, and statuettes, on which, from natural fondness for the work, Laura's hand is sometimes employed. She chases in precious metals to perfection. For myself, I receive as many commissions as I can execute from rich merchants, who are many of them experienced connoisseurs in pictures. I also keep up a correspondence with my old patron the ex-governor, in England. Nor have we forgotten old friends. Altoviti and the print-seller have paid us a visit.

THE OXFORD PROFESSOR AND THE HARPIST



*THE OXFORD PROFESSOR AND THE
HARPIST.*

IT is a long, long time I look back into the past ; but Oxford, once known, is a city not easily forgotten. Those particular localities which I best knew, and of which I have most to speak, come out vividly in the memory as if I had beheld them but recently. Yet they are swept away. Oxford has changed less than any place I know, yet she has not wholly escaped the restorer. Many of her darkened walls and college fronts have been scraped and faced with new stone. The life of the University has few features in common with that of the period to which I refer, when strongly marked characters abounded, both among the dons and undergraduates. The singularly robust life of the past has been exchanged for a level of refinement and common propriety. Civilisation has swept away the good and the bad with the same broom. The gardens are now prim ; but the wooded pastures are less shaded, and many old elms are now no more.

In my own class also I note a great change. The old scout, affluent in rich perquisites, did pretty much as he pleased ; the present scout is but the shadow of the old scout. When I first knew the University it would have puzzled many of the young gentlemen to tell why they went to Oxford. Comparatively few of them read,

but they would stand about the college gateways and banter with the town idlers. Now, we look upon the deformed and mentally afflicted with simple pity—then, the roystering student used to get fun out of these griefs, not from brute wantonness perhaps ; feeling was different then, and every college gate had its character of dwarf, cripple, and idiot, who came and lingered about for what he could get, and nobody took offence at the sight of deformity, but as I say found material for mirth in it. In those day the mendicants were sturdy, and the very paupers well fed. Even the inmates of the town gaol went out for a walk, at least to fetch soup from the colleges for the gaol diet. I often noticed able-bodied paupers, who were sent to water the roads in summer, sit down in the shade near St. Giles's pump, and partake of a good and abundant dinner, provided them hot from the workhouse. They had enough and to spare. Now, on the contrary, one would swear that the scavenger did his work on an empty stomach. But what of all things has struck me is the extinction of a class of elderly women, or lady-paupers, who formerly abounded, and who, having miscalculated the probable time they had to live, and having in consequence got rid of their means too soon, used to take up their abode in the 'House,' and live on in genteel ease and comfort, going in and out as they thought fit by way of change, receiving and paying visits. They had little cupboards, and kept their cups and saucers and teapots, and took tea alone or with some near friend. Now, antiquated dames are spared the pleasant trouble of tea-making ; the cupboards have gone, the china has been broken by the cruel new

Poor Law Boards, and one huge pot does the tea brewing for the whole establishment.

All is changed : so of the old apple-women, who would seat themselves with their baskets where they fancied, and keep their ground. These are gone with those other barbarisms, the dwarfs, the idiots, and cripples the ' Old Joes,' and ' Old Jolinnies,' and bull-baiting, and cock-fighting—not even the ' Town and Gown ' rows are kept up. The pugilistic champions who commanded general admiration and respectable friends have gone down in repute. The roughs, the cads, and snobs are few, and not so popular as of old. Nay, even old prejudices which were strong and troublesome have changed for a new and subtler kind of dislikes.

Yet after all Oxford is Oxford still. The rooks still find shelter in some few tall branching elms, and daws and starlings build their nests in the airy towers ; and high up among gilt, glistening vanes and pinnacles the sweet-scented gilliflower finds a home. Below, quadrangle, corridor, and cloister yet afford seclusion to studious men, with gardens and pleasant walks and shades, where the shrubs are ever green, and the ivy looks as if it had crept on for ages. Massive walls are there, grey with age, pierced with quaint casements, where hoary scholars and divines, leaving grave folios, come ever and anon to look out and rub their dim eyes more like solemn visionary beings than human. Yet they are not unhappy in their thought-peopled solitude. Theirs is a noble pride and ambition. The world, as the blind poet sung, rings from side to side with their names, and their sayings and their wisdom are the light, the glory, and the wonder of mankind.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCED TO THE PROFESSOR OF ASTRONOMY.

WHEN university townspeople wish to offend a vain college scout they will tell him that he has forgotten himself, that he was originally taken from the plough-tail. College servants have as a rule the manners of over-fed rustics, who often seem to court some sort of rebuke. I myself lay under the stigma of having followed the plough, before Dr. Belton made me scout to Professor Campo of St. James's. Dr. Campo, as he was commonly called, was chiefly famed as an astronomer. He lived in a tower above and alone, while Mother Atkins, his housekeeper, kept all the house below, the terror of everybody round about, an awful creature, persecuting dust and dirt wherever she could find them without mercy, until, to use her own words, 'the place was as clean as a pink, as sweet as a nut, and you might eat off the very floors.'

It was a wet, dirty morning when I made my first appearance in Newton's Quad and rang the Doctor's bell. The brass knocker was as gold newly burnished, and the pavement of the entrance hall of unsullied whiteness. Mother Atkins answered the bell, and began to assail me in the following manner, 'Who are you? Where do you come from? What do you want? Wipe your boots, how dare you? What's your business? Go round to the stables. How dare you, I say, come to the front door? Bless my soul, what next.' At this point

a pretty maid, carrying a pail, appeared in the hall, whom I immediately recognised as a native of our village, who like myself had left a rural home to take service in Oxford under her aunt Mother Atkins.

‘Dear me, Aunt,’ she exclaimed, ‘why it’s our neighbour Singleton’s boy. Do let him come in, Mistress Atkins. I’ll fetch a mat to wipe his boots.’ Then addressing me she continued, ‘Why, Dick, what brings you here?’

‘I be come,’ said I, ‘with a letter from the Reverend Doctor Belton to your master, to see if I be big enough, and old enough, and ’cute enough to be his servant; and here it be,’ I added, fumbling in my pockets for the letter of recommendation, which I found and handed to Mother Atkins, who immediately cooled down and observed in a manner quite different to her first that Dr. Belton was indeed a most worthy man and divine, and formerly fellow of St. James’s. ‘Katty,’ she proceeded, ‘look you well that the boy wipes his hobnails while I go to the Professor;’ saying which the old lady disappeared adjusting four stiff curls that clung to the sides of her face as though they were nailed there like scarecrows on a barn door.

Katty, the housemaid, had begun to give me a hasty, graphic, but not flattering, sketch of Mother Atkins, and a glowing estimate of Professor Campo, when I was startled by a loud noise high up on the broad winding stairs. The noise sounded like persons quarrelling, and as it approached nearer I could distinguish Mother Atkins’s voice urging some point with great volubility and earnestness. She had kept on some time when she was interrupted by an apparently angry rejoinder. It

was the Doctor's, who descended the stairs crying, 'Where is the boy, *per Bacco*? I have listened and waited too long by far. Go into your room, Mrs. Atkins, go in, or I will tell Dr. Belton that you have affronted his boy.'

Having silenced his housekeeper, the Doctor, who wore anything but an angry countenance, approached me as I stood on the door mat, afraid to stir by reason of Mrs. Atkins's injunctions.

The Doctor began to read aloud the letter which he held in his hand, and which was quite characteristic of the writer. It ran as follows :—

'Dear Campo,—The bearer of this letter is honest, and not an idiot, as is the rule, I say it to our shame, with clodhoppers in general. You may mould him to your liking. I have told him that if he fails to use you well I will break every bone in his body,

'Yours ever,

'J. BELTON.'

'P.S. I think I have now set you up: I sent you Mother Atkins to keep the house clean and take care of your money. I sent you the rosy niece to mitigate the severity of the aunt, and I now confide to you the best lad in my parish.'

CHAPTER II.

THE PROFESSOR AND THE ROOKS.

IF the Professor intended to get rid of the housekeeper, his reading of the letter of recommendation which I had brought answered that purpose, for on its conclusion she disappeared, and was not seen again by Dr. Campo for several hours. But she really was not so terrible to those who knew her ways. Among her grievances was a rookery, which in part overhung the tower where the Doctor had made his study, in which he would sit for hours watching those indefatigable birds building their nests on the tree tops above the loftiest pinnacle. He watched them lace and interlace the bits of stick, and listened to their chatter and clatter, and tried to understand their disputes. When the cawing ran high and loud, he would rush to the loop-hole and look out upon the busy scene, and wonder like a child, and question and surmise what the point in dispute might be. Not so the housekeeper; she hated the rooks with all her heart, because they scattered ten thousand fragments of bud and twig upon the snowy pavement and doorstep, which were her pride. 'Oh those rooks! those rooks!' she would exclaim. 'I wish there were none. What on earth can Dr. Campo see in those rooks?'

Mrs. Atkins had a sympathiser in her antipathy to the rooks in the person of no less an individual than the Dean of the College himself. Dean Wimbledon had grown very nervous of late years, so that he could not

bear the least noise. Had the rooks tenanted the elms always, he might have grown reconciled to their fuss, but coming in suddenly on the first approach of spring, he suffered greatly from their clatter, more especially at daybreak. The back of the Dean's lodging was near the tower in a recess, so that he could not see into our quarters, nor could we see aught of his, save a part of the Deanery roof, namely, a large deep gutter, a monster chimney stack, and a huge leaden water-spout, which the rooks contrived to fill with their litter of sticks. The hatred of the Dean and our housekeeper for the rooks increased in the same degree as my master's interest and affection for them. Then what was the astronomer's anger when one morning he beheld his neighbour's page on the near gable, with a long cord to which a heavy stone was attached, labouring with all his might to hurl down the rookery. The enemy stood in the gutter and cast the stone right down into the nests, and scattered them one by one with great skill, accompanying each piece of havoc with a chuckling laugh of triumph. For a moment the Doctor seemed stupefied, and could not bring his thoughts to bear upon the scene of destruction he beheld, but coming to himself he shouted through the loop-hole casement like thunder. The page paused for a moment, and but a moment. In mighty anger the Professor slid down the stairs. It was the work of a moment to send Mother Atkins to inquire, to insist, to implore the Dean to stay the havoc which the boy on the roof was creating. She saw the Dean, who told her that he had ordered the boy to do as he was doing, and that Dr. Campo would molest him at his peril. The urchin on the roof soon got intelligence of the interview

between Mother Atkins and the Dean, and continued his work with infinitely greater zest than before, grinning and lolling out his tongue in a significant and impudent sort of way at the Professor.

'*Per Bacco!*' exclaimed the Doctor in excessive anger, 'this is too much.' Clenching his teeth he first tried to loosen the iron bar which divided the loop-hole, and I imagined at the moment that he had some idea of putting an end to young Higgins on the leads—Higgins was the boy's name. Foiled in his efforts to move the bar, the Professor became calmer, and rushed to his inner room, to mourn perhaps over the folly of his wrath, or perhaps brood over his wrongs, I could not tell. I had beheld through a crevice what was going on, and witnessed the despatch of the housekeeper; heard the uncivil message from the Dean, and beheld the intolerable insolence of the boy. My blood boiled to avenge the insults heaped upon my master. I called to Higgins from the loop-hole. 'Higgins,' said I, 'the next time I come across you in the streets, if it be for a month to come, I'll loosen a few of your teeth for you for your insolence to the Professor.' 'Hobnails,' screamed Higgins, 'I'm your man, down with you. Don't wait, come down into the Quad, and we'll soon see about that.'

Now it happened that one great reason for the liking Dr. Belton had for me was that he believed me to have some spirit, as I had on a certain occasion thrashed a hulky fellow in the parish bigger than myself for an act of cowardice. Higgins and I entered the Quad unseen, as we thought. We looked about, and perceiving no one at the few back windows, we fell to

work in earnest, and fought five or six rounds, when on a sudden I found myself being clawed by Mother Atkins. She got hold of me by the collar, and so nearly choked me that I was powerless to defend myself. The consequence was, that my opponent, taking unfair advantage, dealt me several blows in succession, which nearly knocked the life out of me. Smarting with pain and rage, I tore myself from the housekeeper's hold, and fell upon Higgins with all my strength, and the result was that in a few minutes he lay for dead on the flags where I had hurled him. I also presented anything but an agreeable spectacle to the astonished spectators who had now gathered around us. It was with difficulty that I made out among those assembled the Dean himself, the various domestics—butlers, porters, scouts, housemaids under and upper—and, conspicuous among the throng, Professor Campo and Dr. Belton.

The first individual who made any movement when astonishment had somewhat subsided was Dr. Belton, who, having ascertained the cause of the combat, without uttering a word, thrust his hand into his pocket and gave me half-a-crown.

The fight was fierce and brief, and I was not eager to forgive the housekeeper for the disadvantage that her officious friendliness imposed upon me. However, my adversary had little to boast of in the end. He was no favourite in Newton's Quad. The conflict over, the Dean being responsible for order within the precincts of St. James's, had the peace-breakers before him, and by the aid of the Professor obtained a circumstantial account of the whole affair. He of course believed the Professor respecting the outrageousness of Higgins's

behaviour on the leads, and I acknowledged the part I had taken, and how that I had volunteered to thrash my fellow delinquent in the breach of the peace. The Dean told Higgins to pack up and begone, as soon as he could see the gateway, for his eyes were not then quite in condition, and he added that he regretted to have annoyed the first Latin Scholar in Europe in the person of Dr. Campo, and that had he known Dr. Campo had entertained so great a love for the rooks, he would have endured them. ‘And now, Doctor,’ he concluded, ‘you of course will not object to get rid of *your* boy? It is only fair.’

The Professor replied that he could hardly bring himself to play a part so ungrateful to one who had stood by him with so much courage and devotion. The end of it all was that Higgins was pardoned by the intercession of my master.

As for the rooks, some moved to a neighbouring clump of trees, and some remained, but apparently not without suspicion of Higgins, who, however, never more showed his vulgar face on the house-top. The Professor took less notice of the rookery from that time ; but he discovered a brood of starlings on the opposite side of the tower which served his turn, and it was delightful to see him feeding his pets with remnants of his meals.

CHAPTER III.

SCOUTS.

DR. CAMPO seldom left college until dusk, when his studies called him to the observatory in the suburbs, which edifice he might have inhabited but that in his large heart he conceived it might be of greater service to the junior astronomer, who had a wife and seven children to maintain on a small salary. At dusk the Professor would be seen to glide past the porter's lodge like a black apparition, and this habit was so usual with him that nobody paid much heed to his going out or coming in. And yet it was the hour when the young scouts assembled about the lodge for a little gossip and slander, and to show their mental darkness generally. An ordinary young scout is hardly endurable. He comes to the university without ideas beyond the straw-yard and barn, yet in a few weeks he will attempt to discuss questions of vital importance, which he has heard debated by scholars whom he serves. The scout may have lived hard hitherto, but in an hour, as it were, he becomes dainty in his meals, and can hardly find a morsel that suits his palate. As for fat, he tells you point blank that 'he can't and wun't et it.' With a class of this kind, who leap from hobnails to pumps at a bound, one would have expected some little trouble with regard to the Professor's gaunt but noble figure, and particularly his strange garb, which was hardly orthodox, seeing that he wore his cloak over his academical robes instead of

under them, as the custom was. The only effect of the Doctor's night walk was to startle a few of the ex-bumpkins to a sense of local duties in the way of service to be fulfilled on their part.

'Be that the Doctor?' one would ask. Being answered in the affirmative, he would add, 'Then it be time to give So-and-So coffee.'

And so it was that the Doctor's evening departure served in lieu of a clock to denote the time of serving coffee.

If Master Bumpkin is dainty of tooth, he is not easier pleased with his drink. The old ale of the college is, however, all to his taste. He is thereupon comfortable after hall dinner, and possibly tired, and usually too indolent to be excited by anything. Yet the battle about the rooks, and the thrashing of Higgins, made a great stir among the small fry of the lodge and the scullery-women.

Dr. Campo had a *protégé* in the kitchen—an Italian from Pisa, who was a great cook after the manner of Italians, who, however, are not equal to the French in that line. Nevertheless the young fellow proved an acceptable acquisition to the foundation, and became popular with all the people in the place.

Pietro, the cook, had boundless spirits and wit at command, and at leisure times, when old 'fellows' were sipping port and scullery-maids clearing up, he would assemble the underlings and tell them stories that made them stare with amazement, stories of Italian origin, and queer anecdotes which he had picked up in his Temple life—for he had been valet to a law fellow who had kept terms in London, and spent the vacation in the

quiet groves of Oxford. On the evening after the battle of the rookery Pietro was all excitement. His patron had been insulted and his honour avenged. He came to the tower, took me to the kitchen, and eulogised my behaviour before all assembled. He told me that my father was no doubt, and with great reason, proud of his son. He added, 'I, Pietro, the cook, formerly kitchen boy in the university of Pisa, am vain of your friendship. I shall celebrate your deeds to-night, and I will always adore you. You shall sup with me. The small, tender duck is almost done. Behold it on the spit bursting with rich gravy and divine vermicelli. I have stuffed it to the full. It is a feast fit for the Doctor himself. I shall one night gladden his eyes with the companion supper to this which I have provided for you.'

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROFESSOR AND HIS TAILOR.

IN ordinary, Dr. Campo indulged in one suit of black in twelve months. From some cause or other, when I entered his service, he had not thought fit to call in the aid of his tailor for over three years. This fact was well known to the college from the gossiping of the tailor, and particularly of the scouts, who on principle dislike those of the gentry who go threadbare, as the chief perquisites of a college servant consist of left-off garments, which often are but little worn, more especially

among the gentlemen commoners and prodigal undergraduates. After I had been some two months in the Doctor's establishment he sent me to summon a master tailor and robe-maker.

On his arrival at the lodge, which happened to be full of scouts, Mr. Winks (such was the tailor's name) must needs announce his business at St. James's, and this he did in a way to raise a laugh at the expense of my master. I happened to be passing at the time, and came in for my share of the banter. An old and cunning bed-maker in particular complimented me on the perquisites I was likely to secure in the left-off well-seasoned garments which had already done the Professor of Astronomy duty for six-and-thirty calendar months. I was asked what I would take for the pants. Another said he would like to have the refusal of the coat. Higgins, the Dean's page, who, having recovered his effrontery, was present, bespoke the vest. Winks the tailor had hardly got rid of the grin from his impudent face when he entered the Professor's study in the tower, where I also had occasion to be at the time.

After the usual bowing and scraping, in which Winks excelled, he without waiting instructions commenced a garrulous discourse on the fashions and the weather, but without response from Dr. Campo, who continued writing.

'I presume, sir,' said Winks, 'that you will require me to make a similar suit to the last—to those you have on, sir. I remember you approved of the cut. I have a piece of cashmere, soft as velvet, similar to the last, will wear for years.'

After a pause Winks continued: 'Tis much talked

of, sir, that you will deliver a Latin Oration at the theatre at the Commemoration next week. Perhaps, sir, you may require a new cap and gown for the occasion, and if so I need not say that I shall be most happy to supply you either on purchase or hire. In fact I have some by me, as good as new, about your size, made for and returned by Dr. Bentham the term before last. Or it may be, sir, that you propose to travel next long vacation, and if so I can provide you with an outfit for any climate on the shortest notice.'

As the Professor made no response up to this point, Winks began to look silly. He had clearly exhausted his stock of commonplace, and nothing remained for him but to fidget and be silent.

The Professor observing this laid aside his pen and paper and prepared to give the man attention.

'Mr. Winks,' he began.

'Sir,' said Mr. Winks.

The Professor proceeded: 'You formerly, if I remember rightly, had a smart young fellow in your employ named Martin, I think, a cutter?'

Winks.—'Yes, sir, I have him now, a clever young man—my right hand.'

Professor.—'I wish you to send him to me.'

Winks.—'Yes, sir.'

Professor.—'I may be mistaken, but if my memory is not treacherous, the said cutter does not profess to know what I want better than I know myself. Have the goodness, Mr. Winks, to send the young man Martin to me. I will describe to him my wants. Good morning, Mr. Winks.'

CHAPTER V.

THE PROFESSOR'S ORATION.

IT was a bright June day when Mother Atkins shut up the lodgings of Dr. Campo, and decked in her scarlet cloak and black silk bonnet set out, in company with her niece, to see the visitors arrive and witness the Commemoration. The Doctor had likewise given me a holiday. We all three sallied forth to the High Street, which was thronged with strangers. A thousand gay dresses added the charms of colour to the quaint streets and lanes, and lit up the sombre quadrangles and made Edens of the college gardens. Everybody was abroad ; but of all the proud dames who promenaded the streets on that day none came up to Mother Atkins in conceit, 'for why,' as she expressed it, 'the great scholar Dr. Campo would read his Latin Oration before all the dons and nobles of the land in the great theatre.'

We obtained a place on the steps of the Clarendon Printing House, which is next to the theatre, and whence we could observe the people go in, and truly, as Mrs. Atkins said, 'it was a beautiful sight,' as one by one, and two by two, the heads of the houses with their wives and daughters and grand visitors passed by and entered the grand palace. But what was the house-keeper's delight when among the throng she beheld the Professor in his new black suit and scarlet robes ascend the steps and enter that Temple of Fame. The Professor was accompanied by the famous singer, his countryman Rubrinotti.

After a while we obtained admittance into the enclosed space at the back of the theatre, and where, the windows being open, we could hear the singing. We enjoyed the favour by the aid of one of the beadles who knew Mother Atkins, and great was the treat.

Now all was still as if among the tombs, when lo ! the voice of the great master, the wonder of the age in song, the voice of Rubrinotti burst forth out of the open casements as if to spread itself over the groves beyond and around ; and meanwhile the organ took up the singer's notes as if to shadow and strengthen their long-drawn cadence and tender tones, tones which made the heart leap with delight, and left the breath in suspense as the singer willed.

Rubrinotti's song was succeeded by the reading of the Prize Poem. We were informed of the programme by the beadle. The reading of the poem ceased. It caused little stir ; but not so the reading of the essay in Latin by Professor Campo. Mrs. Atkins turned pale with anxiety when the news was brought to us that the Doctor was up. Then it was that unwonted stillness prevailed, and ever and anon the silvery voice of our good master was heard in measured accents, broken at intervals by deep and earnest shouts of approval and applause, though not so loud nor so general as those which had greeted Rubrinotti. At length the Professor ceased, or, as it seemed to us without, his oration was cut short by one universal concert of applause, to which it sounded to us as though the organ added notes of triumph. The beadle told us in confidence that only a few dons and professors understood our master ; but that the company shouted in imitation of the cele-

brated scholars who were assembled from all parts of the world.

Whatever that bright day may have done for Dr. Campo it was a great day for his housekeeper, as any one might have guessed who beheld her enter the wide open gates of St. James's without heeding the porter's nod or the butler's smile. Rubrinotti dined in the tower the day after the great day of the Commemoration. Dr. Campo's triumph was on every tongue, from the highest to the lowest. The flattering report was unvaried. The Latin Oration had astonished, amazed, and held spell-bound the mightiest literary potentates present. Yet to see the good-natured melancholy man feeding the second brood of starlings in the leaden spout at the back of the tower was a touching sight.

Ere long Rubrinotti came up the winding stairs singing as he came, and he had barely entered the study when he seized an ancient guitar which the Doctor treasured for its tone, and having put it into tune Rubrinotti sang the song or ode which he had sung the day before in the theatre at the cost of five hundred guineas to the University; and he seemed so happy, and patted Mrs. Atkins on the cheek, almost sending the old dame out of her mind with vanity.

No idea could be formed of the resources and powers of pleasing which the housekeeper had for our home festival in the tower study. And who were the guests? None other than Dr. Belton, and the poor sub-professor of astronomy and his wife and elder girls and boys, with Pietro di Pisa for an extra waiter and master of the ceremonies. No doubt Mother Atkins was at first dissatisfied with the low rank of the company for

the most part, but she soon forgot her disappointment at finding that no great dons came to eat her tarts, puffs, and strawberries and cream. In the end she was reconciled, and smiled upon her guests, as she considered the company, and all went off well. Hundreds would have paid their guineas to have been present in the study that night to have heard the mighty artist sing.

CHAPTER VI.

BREAKFAST AT THE TOWER.

MRS. ATKINS'S resources were further put to the test in providing sleeping accommodation for Dr. Belton and Signor Rubrinotti. Nothing could exceed the whiteness of her dimity bed-hangings, which had been preserved pinned up in paper, and the carpets in like manner had been carefully protected from dust. But to contemplate Mother Atkins at perfection she should have been seen on the following morning. She would see nobody, hear nobody other than her company and her own people, as she called her niece, myself, and Pietro. First, there was no cream to be had. The town was so full of guests, and the strawberries so fine, that the usual dairies, with their extra supplies, had been drained to the last drop. Four times I sallied forth for cream, and each time returned with an empty pitcher.

Fortunately, Pietro de Pisa was great on great occasions. Learning how matters stood, he was across the

quadrangle, begging from door to door, and up and down every stair in the college. A drop from one scout, a drop from another scout who could be persuaded he had some to spare, and where Pietro could not beg he bought, and where he could neither beg nor buy he pilfered. It was all one to the nimble-witted Pietro di Pisa when Dr. Campo and Signor Rubrinotti were in question. In half-an-hour Pietro had levied contributions on innumerable fellows' and students' reserves, and returned in triumph to the tower with cream in abundance. Then up went the coffee and cocoa, tea, strawberries, pounded sugar, china basins, and dessert-spoons. Meanwhile the head cook arrived with newly-made native sausages procured for the occasion, although not in season, a Berkshire ham, and all manner of dishes of chicken, duckling, dab-chick, and moor-hen, which Pietro had bespoken over-day. Higgins stood at the Dean's door with amazement painted on his vulgar face. A fisherman, a friend of Pietro's, had brought the river-fowl, a large eel, and some freshwater crayfish. Mrs. Atkins' time had arrived. Dr. Belton pronounced the breakfast everything that could be desired, and sat over it for two hours. Professor Campo kindly said it was nothing to what Mrs. Atkins could do—it was a mere trifle. Rubrinotti said he had breakfasted in every city in Europe, and had never seen the like of it. Saving the white table-cloths, and the coffee, tea, toast, chocolate, and strawberries, the arrangements had been the work of Pietro's genius. It was he who procured the crayfish in vermillion shells. It was he who thought of the moor-hens, bald-coot, and dab-chick, and had them roasted in and served up in vine-leaves, and it was he who bought

the huge eel which so delighted Rubrinotti. Pietro was a favourite, and the goodness of the breakfast was largely owing to that fact. The head cook lent the newly-cut Berkshire ham to oblige Pietro, and permitted the use of the fire to cook the water-fowl.

But Pietro's happiest thought has yet to be told. After a breakfast so ample and so varied, the company reclined at the several casements that overlook the quadrangle and gardens. Eventually, at Rubrinotti's request, they descended to the cool shrubbery which was sacred to the fellows of the foundation. Here they were free from intrusion, owing to the extensive college gardens being thrown open to all visitors during the week of the festival. By-and-by Pietro and the college butler appeared at the iron gate with two enormous, massive, antique, silver tankards—one denominated a claret-cup, the other a cider-cup, and both prepared in a way for which St. James's was renowned. St. James's had a number of law-fellows to please, and these on their brief visits passed a good bit of their time in the kitchen and buttery. The result was the invention of several new dainties. Among the rest a veal pie, fit for an emperor, and an improved method of cooking water-fowl and stewing eels. The secret of concocting the cool drinks referred to, sent into the fellows' garden, had been known and kept a secret for a century and a half, so it was said.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COLLEGES DESERTED.

THE Commemoration seems, but only seems, to open the hearts of the sedate and scholarly people who read and slumber on in Oxford. When the tumult is over then comes the deep and solemn stillness—the lull of the Long Vacation—and the kitchen fires go out, and poverty sets in upon the vassals of the town and suburbs. Only a few dons remain, and these wander about the lanes and highways seemingly dreaming as they go. But few as they are, the town is more than awed by their presence and haughty and cold reserve. Those sages in their wanderings never failed to note aught that was amiss, strange, or unaccountable in town and village ; and the laws of the University were in their way very inquisitorial and harsh.

Hardly a suburban cottage escaped the eye of the marshal or his staff. Few rustic maidens remained at home to add interest to the woodbine porches in the hamlets around. Still occasionally the pedestrian here and there came upon a youthful figure, the pride of some farmer's or cotter's hearth : and the shady lane, overhung with wild roses, seemed all the more delightful in the presence of some gentle Alice, Katty, or Jessy. But what earthly interest could 'a nymph-like virgin tripping by,' have for mere bookworms, grey-headed bachelors, fellows of colleges forbidden by ancient enactments to take unto themselves wives? None whatever. The farmer's daughter would rather mar the

prospect for the husky-eyed scholar than otherwise. Not so, however, for the romantic youths, often of high birth, among the undergraduates.

In a vale some three miles from the glistening spires of Oxford, the River Dent wound its silvery way, snake-like, through certain woods and meads and past stunted willows, near where John Dell, grazier, farmer, fisherman, and publican, kept old ale for casual visitors and native farmers in winter, and a fresh home-brewed tap of a milder sort for more frequent visitants in summer; more especially he kept a tap for those who knew of the secret that a delicate fish dinner could be obtained at the thatched cottage under the copse where his hostelry was situated. Perhaps not a score of people in the near city knew of the treat afforded by John Dell to the chosen few. A comelier, more civil couple than John Dell and his wife could hardly well be, and the students who had the good fortune to find their way to the 'Spotted Trout' never failed to pay a second visit, which always ended in friendly acquaintanceship between the host and his guests. John had a way of his own of baking pike and eels which gave great satisfaction to the epicures. The product of his brick oven and wood fire was rendered the more savoury for a walk in the air of the Dent Vale, where the breeze swept over the streamlet. And then the table-cloth and napkins were as driven snow, the glasses bright, and the ale sparkling.

CHAPTER VIII.

PASTORAL SCENES.

THE host of the 'Spotted Trout' had a growing family of daughters; and from the eldest, in her nineteenth year, whose name was Lucy, to the little toddler of three years old, it would not have been easy to find in all the country round so lovely a group. Lilies and violets, roses and peaches, coral and pearl, seemed all blended in the fair-complexioned offspring of handsome John and Mary Dell.

Neighbouring rustics would linger about at night-fall to catch as it were inadvertently a glimpse of Lucy Dell before hieing them home to bed, and many a farmer found it difficult to pass the cottage without taking a neighbourly glass of John's ale as a pretext to pass a compliment to Lucy. Young men coming suddenly in for the first time hesitated on the threshold, abashed, wonder-stricken by the presence of such unexpected beauty, and the privilege of entering the humble inn without ceremony was often entirely waived by the well-bred undergraduates who had stumbled upon the favoured abode. Yet Lucy never thought that these youths—sons of earls, marquises, and dukes—often when they stood hesitating to enter the humble porch, hesitated on her account, and in obedience to a spirit of refinement which in like manner compelled the rustic boy to pick his words and keep a respectful distance. The veriest hobnails and the desperate poacher alike spared her favourite orchard and paddock where the

humble-bee built waxen cells in mossy bank, and the blackbird and thrush reared their young in the ivy-clad stumps and pollard oaks.

Next to Lucy came a sister, her junior by two years, Lily, like her namesake of the garden, changeful with the moment, as the clouds or the sunshine of life prevailed. And thus each beauteous offspring budded forth as the seasons came, and tranquility and joy were the attendants of each new comer, and John Dell welcomed them as Abram the angels, and from his ample means found them wholesome food and comely raiment, and such simple education as a near village school afforded ; they were all as happy as the days were long, and never dreamt of change or evil.

John had married his wife from the house of the Dean of St. James's, to whom reference has been made in the matter of the rookery. She had been some years a favourite domestic of the family. The Dean and his lady had reluctantly parted with her. The comely Lucy was destined to fill the place which her mother had held in the Dean's sombre household. The time had arrived for her departure, and for her to bid farewell to valley, and copse, and rivulet. She could no longer be permitted to turn the heads of undergraduates, who, as the Dean remarked, under the pretence of hooking pike, came to gaze upon the girls at the 'Spotted Trout.' Such temptations could not be permitted within walking distance of a seat of learning, boasting as scholars half the sons of half the nobility of the land. Convents were no longer in vogue thereabouts, and the only refuge for beauty and worth such as Lucy's must be found in some orderly household, where strict watch would follow her

steps, and every well-ordered form and ceremony be strictly enforced. So reasoned the Dean and his lady, and they found a willing coadjutor in the Rector of the parish where Lucy dwelt.

This arrangement, in which the Dean and Rector combined, made objections on the part of John and Mary Dell a waste of words; but when the time arrived for it to take effect, lo! the whole parish took the matter to heart as if the girl had been necessary to their very existence.

‘Why, John Dell,’ said a farmer, ‘surely thee ben’t going to box up thy girl from the light o’ day for the sake of some six pund a year and her boord? She be a main deal too good for sarvice. Besides, what be us to do with the lads? There be Dick my son, as worthy a lad as any in the shire, dotes upon her; and it were only last Sunday he set on the old dame his mother to badger me into spaking a word to thee in his favour, for he be bashful.’

‘Farmer Byles,’ said John Dell, ‘we be old friends, as one may say neighbours. Our meads run side by side, and I ha’ known thee some five-and-thirty years, and I never heard an ill word spoken of thee or of thine, and it would ha’ done my heart good to ha’ given Lucy to Dick, had I been asked. But how could I guess what thee hast told me? Lucy has given her heart away; I am afraid to say to whom.’

‘Afraid to say to whom!’ In those words, what a world of anxiety were involved. Why had John Dell slept no better than a criminal during the past six months? Why had he sat up late at night, when the children slept, talking in half whispers to his wife? Why

had the University proctors' men been seen prowling in the neighbourhood at nightfall, and why had the marshal presumed to suggest that John Dell should bar his door to all junior members of the University if he wished to keep a roof over his head? It was simply because a handsome girl had been seen walking with a baronet's son in a green lane at the back of John's cottage. Need I say who was that girl? Who could she be other than the lovely Lucy? Her lover, than whom none more honourable and sincere ever breathed, was the second son of Sir Christopher Berton Lea, of Berton Hall, of the adjoining county, the proud head of one of the proudest families in all the shire.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PROFESSOR GIVES A FISH DINNER.

THE reason for introducing the reader to the pleasant vale described in the foregoing chapter, and to the inhabitants of the 'Spotted Trout,' will be apparent when I say that it was one of the favourite haunts of Dr. Campo, my master. The Doctor had delayed the departure of Signor Rubrinotti from St. James's in order to show him the various objects worth seeing in the University, and, above all, to enjoy his company in the pastoral scenes which abound in the neighbourhood. I had been despatched over-night to order a particular selection of fish for the occasion of the visit of the two friends to the 'Spotted Trout;' and had by arrangement

remained in the vicinity all night, in order to be present and wait at table the next day. I had pleaded for this favour because the 'Spotted Trout' was within five fields of my grandfather's cottage, and near where I was born. I had therefore an opportunity of visiting friends, and of listening to what little gossip was worth hearing. Everywhere round about the fame of Lucy Dell's beauty seemed to have spread, and the hint of some family mystery unfavourable to the Dells had been sown.

I may as well say who was the evil spirit that had been the first in the field to circulate doubts concerning the honest inhabitants of the 'Spotted Trout.' It was none other than Higgins, page to the Dean of St. James's, the same whom I had thrashed. He came from the same neighbourhood. Being an active fellow when he grew up, the proctor secured his services as one of the runners who follow the marshal in his rounds by night, which they make in all parts of the suburbs, accompanied by the proctor, in order to prevent high-born undergraduates from forming low connections with the daughters of the poor. This occupation suited the evil genius of Higgins vastly. He it was who had seen Lucy Dell and the student, Mr. Lea, walking in the grove, and had entered the circumstance in a book kept at the marshal's office for future use. Hence the haste which the Dean displayed to get Lucy into his house. The worry all arose out of that note made by Higgins in the proctor's office.

Nothing definite was said to John Dell; he was only urged to get Lucy away from temptation. Not a word about Mr. Frank Lea. Higgins's word went not too far when the reputation of a collegian of family was

at stake, and he was cautioned to mention to no living being that which had attracted his notice. Nevertheless Higgins, as I have said, sowed his hints abundantly, and Mr. Frank Lea was carpeted by the proctor, and ordered to keep within for two weeks, and to break off all communication with the 'Spotted Trout' on pain of expulsion from the University. This was the state of things when Dr. Campo partook of a fish dinner at the Dells, and even while John and his wife and daughter tried to please their great favourite Dr. Campo, tears came unbidden to their eyes, and before the day was over poor John literally broke down, and stole away, and hid himself. Then it was that the Doctor, missing the landlord, insisted upon his presence, and then it was that the wife told in sobs how the state of her household affairs stood; and then too I added my mite to the woeful story, and told of the mischievous agency of Higgins, and his discovery, and of the malignant hints scattered by his cross-grained old mother at the near hamlet; and then it was that Dr. Campo, the good man, swore by the body of the god Bacchus that he would thwart the whole of them. Dr. Campo and Rubrinotti smoked an extra pipe before they left the first floor of the 'Spotted Trout,' and conversed in Italian on the subject of Lucy Dell and Frank Lea, and how they could best serve the honest family below. Not understanding at that time the Italian language, I cannot tell precisely what was said; but the result of their deliberations can be told.

CHAPTER X.

THE GOWN AND THE TOWN.

THE conference between the Italians at the rural inn was succeeded by a longer and more serious one on the following day at Dr. Campo's lodgings in the tower of St. James's College. Here the two friends passed a morning apparently much puzzled how to proceed, and no wonder, for they had set themselves to combat with an ancient institution whose foundation had become consolidated with the growth of centuries, and whose peculiar by-laws were administered with a rigour which Loyola might have envied. Woe to the wight who, sixty years ago, opposed those laws framed to promote morality among the sons of the great houses of the empire. Men, aptly denominated proctors' bull-dogs, patrolled the back streets and lanes under the command of a marshal, and took stock of every humble home, keeping up a very reign of terror among the poor, whose daughters only too often found their way to the spinning house or city gaol ; and many an innocent girl dated her downfall to some mere act of levity committed in sight of the unseen, lynx-eyed marshal, whose word was enough to bring to durance vile an honest girl if she happened to be poor. Centuries of contention between town and gown, and five hundred years of nightly brawls, had borne witness to the hatred which had prevailed betwixt the rich and the poor in our great seminaries. The poles are not wider asunder in space

than the scholars and dons of Oxford or Cambridge from poor natives in sympathy.

Against this power of proctor and marshal my master, Dr. Campo, conspired, as one might say, on behalf of the humble family of the Dells ; but with what avail ? When next we heard of Lucy Dell it was under circumstances so tragical that while I live the impression they made upon me will remain. No sooner was it decided that she must leave the valley, and that her lover was in peril, than she yielded to despair even as the first primrose of the year is beaten down by the cold March winds.

Meanwhile, the ill-starred youth, Frank Lea, growing reckless, the Baronet, his father, was called into the Council of the University prior to the final mandate which was to expel him from the place. I call to mind the day. I had been in the outskirts of the city, and as far as the eye could reach the floods covered all the land so that barely the heads of the stunted willows rose above the surface of the watery waste. Everywhere desolation held sway. The cold season had suddenly set in ; dark clouds hung overhead like a pall, and ever and anon flocks of wild birds flew past on their way to milder regions. As night approached, snow and sleet came down in blinding showers, lay in driven heaps upon the wayside, clung to each tower, cornice, and battlement, and clothed the old elms with a garment of white. The gloom seemed to infect both man and bird and beast with dread, like as some strange eclipse will on a sudden clothe the gayest tints of the summer foliage with hues of horror. The streets of the city of Gothic fanes were as still as the grave—a stillness broken only

by an occasional horseman coming in from the last hunt of the season.

Turning into a lane that led to the gateway of St. James's, I was startled by, and had scarcely time to save myself from, the heels of a grey horse in full gallop. The rider, well known as a medical practitioner in the town, was barely recognised on his well-known steed ere he was out of sight in the direction of the floods which I recently left behind me. Something was the matter. 'Some student had been drowned,' said a carrier who went by with his cart. 'But who? Of what college?' the questioning commenced. Scouts assembled at lodge doors, surmising who the new victim to the waters might be. Night set in : oil lamps were lit and burnt blue in the dense mist which ushers in the early frost in Oxford ; but still the name, the rank of the drowned student had not transpired. Sir Berton Lea, who had come into the town to remonstrate with his son, and, it might be, to banish him from school, home, and country, in order to spare his name the dishonour of a low match, had arrived in the first quadrangle of St. James's, on his way to dine at the Deanery, at the very instant that all doubt was cleared up respecting the object of the surgeon's wild ride through the streets. The Baronet stopped to inquire the name of the person drowned, and the porter, ignorant of the name and near relationship of the questioner, answered without hesitation that it was 'Mr. Frank Lea of St. Bride's, son of Sir Berton Lea, Baronet, of Berton Hall.'

CHAPTER XI.

ARRIVAL OF CARLOTTA AND THE COUNTESS.

NOT a little of the interest and importance of the visit of Rubrinotti at the tower arose from the fact of his being the bearer of information to the Doctor of some particulars concerning the members of the Campo family abroad. All that remained of that once distinguished name consisted of a widow sister-in-law and her young daughter.

When, as a boy, Ludovico Campo (our Professor) came with his father, a heretic exile, to England, and settled as a Protestant student in Oxford, his only brother Alcide found his way to Holland, and married the daughter of a humble merchant of Rotterdam. As often happens between members of a proud family, a coldness sprang up between the brothers, and all correspondence soon ceased. It was Rubrinotti who brought the intelligence of Alcide's death, and of the survivors, the widow and her daughter Carlotta, whom he (Rubrinotti) had often met with in his wanderings, owing to the fact that Carlotta had been trained for an artist, and had achieved the highest reputation in Europe as a harpist, having played before crowned heads and been rewarded by well filled purses and costly jewels. Dr. Campo, while he gloried in the genius which his niece manifested for music, could not hide his vexation at hearing that one of his illustrious family should have been obliged to win her bread in the character of a wandering musician ; nor did he spare himself for his

unnatural indifference, as he termed it, in not inquiring into the fate of his brother and his kindred, whose only crime was that of allying himself with an honest Dutch merchant's daughter in marriage. So it was, however. The coldness between the brothers originated in this circumstance.

When the Doctor learned from his friend the opera-singer that his only relatives were still in Belgium awaiting engagements and not over well protected, all the generosity of his fine nature revived, and he determined that his sister and her child should no longer cater to man for their bread, but that, as far as he could secure it, retirement and ease should be theirs. It was while this determination was strong within him that he made the visit I have described to the cottage of John Dell, where serious matters concerning that household prevented his making arrangements in that pleasant neighbourhood for the reception of his interesting relatives, as he had fully intended to do. The death of Frank Lea, and the consequent distress and lingering illness of Lucy Dell, gave rise to new suggestions on the subject of providing a rural home for Carlotta and her mother. At this point Farmer Byles, whose appearance in conversation with the landlord of the 'Spotted Trout' has been described, came to the council. With the ultimate aim no doubt of securing a lovely daughter-in-law in the person of Lucy when time should restore her to herself, he at once proffered his house as her home, and promised every comfort and attention that could be desired; and Dr. Campo, thinking that if his fair *protégées*, as he termed them, Carlotta and Lucy, could be united in friendship and affection, the happiness of

both would be enhanced, immediately stepped in and made arrangements for his niece and her mother as lodgers in the rambling old wooden manor house which Byles owned and inhabited, and in which his father and grandfather had passed their days. The views of the Doctor being seconded by the Dells, and blindly and confidently acquiesced in by Lucy, the harpist and her mother were forthwith brought over from Brussels.

I went with the Doctor to town and met the packet at Blackwall. Carlotta and her mother brought an enormous amount of luggage, and among the rest a huge triangular case of iron, which as I afterwards found contained a harp of exquisite workmanship. There was also a large oblong chest, about which Carlotta seemed in great trepidation until it was got out of the hold and landed.

Nothing of importance occurred on our journey home, where we arrived on the following day, and put up at the tower of St. James's, in which place, however, very little time was passed by the strangers, owing to some differences of religious observances. In fact, while the Doctor and the Countess were strictly Protestants, the niece was heart and soul a Roman Catholic.

It was like Dr. Campo never to have opined that this might be so. Things had gone too far to permit of any alteration in his plans, and so by the aid of Farmer Byles's waggon and a post-chaise the trio set out for the Manor House. Before many days had elapsed the newcomers had fairly established themselves in the well-chosen rural abode of peace and plenty; and Lucy, although still in tears, had learned to repose in the affection of the Italian maiden.

Carlotta's first care was to construct a little chapel in an obscure part of the house where there were rooms unused and rarely entered. She found an opening into a closet dimly lit, adjoining her bed-room, and here she placed a glorious picture of the Virgin Mary, from the pencil of Giovanni Bellini, which had been handed down in the family for centuries. An antique lamp suspended from the roof, a cushion on which to kneel, an illuminated missal, which was a family relic: all these enclosed within the folds of ample curtains, transformed the bald wainscoted apartment into a miniature chapel, such as the old nobles of Italy delighted to possess. The Protestant Professor of Modern Science stood aghast when he beheld his niece, whose religious enthusiasm was intense, make these arrangements in the home of the English yeoman. He concluded that he had done for himself. Yet the most that he could think of was to suggest privacy to his dear niece in all that pertained to her religious observances. The long and steady gaze from those lustrous black eyes told him plainer than words could have done that no notice would be taken of his fears, for in fact his meaning was little more understood or his hints likely to be regarded than if addressed to the winter winds then blowing hard without and threatening to uproot every tree in the orchard below. It was curious to behold the beautiful daughter of John Dell watching with perplexed interest the doings of the dark girl who had come to claim her friendship. Lucy half forgot her sorrows in her wonderment at the preparations she beheld, which to half comprehend taxed all the powers of her unsophisticated mind. Poor Dr. Campo, ere he left, sought an interview with the old

farmer, and tried to explain to him how matters stood, and broached the subject of toleration, and much that is usually urged on that subject, to which the farmer listened without understanding one syllable of all the learned Professor's anxious dissertation. But when in conclusion the worthy Professor spoke of persecution of interference, and of the necessity of prudence respecting his niece, then old Byles began, as he said, 'to feel his legs,' and remarked, as he clutched a stick like a club, that 'his house was his castle, and freehold to boot'; that 'he had never feared nor man nor baste; and that he would like to see the fellow who would harm the handsome young woman upstairs, or give a moment's trouble to the daughter of his old friend John Dell, whom God bless.'

Notwithstanding all these genial and determined assurances the Doctor exacted promises of prudence and secrecy from the farmer's household, which consisted of the old man, his dame, and his son Dick, a modest young fellow who, as we have seen, loved Lucy, and who would if he had his deserts one day win her heart and become all in all to her in this world. Of this passion of young Byles Lucy was as yet wholly ignorant, as may have been surmised, otherwise she had never gone to the Manor House to reside while her bleeding heart told her how hard it was to survive the fond and early and honoured love to which she had fallen a victim in the spring time of her life.

It was pitch dark when the Doctor and myself left Byles's manor house to walk home. Dick with a lantern opened a door which led into the orchard, where grew gigantic yew trees. Suddenly the young yeoman gave

a start as the form of a man sprang up from a crouching position in the shade, disturbed by the light, and he beheld the well known figure of Higgins, the Proctor's runner, making off into the darkness. A triumphant chuckle further betrayed the individuality of the spy. Dick took the precaution to make an inspection of the exterior of the mansion, when, lo! he found a ladder, brought from a near homestead, planted against the narrow casement, which commanded a full view of the chapel which Carlotta had extemporised, while the soft light of the lamp lit up the heavenly features of the Virgin Mary, the work of the inspired pencil of Giovanni Bellini. The Doctor's look was grave, and Dick's eyes flashed fire, auguring no good for Higgins.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HARPIST AT THE MANOR HOUSE.

FARMER BYLES' manor house was situated about three hundred yards from the main road, which branched off from the turnpike way and ceased with the little village of Barton-on-the-Hill, which consisted of seventy-five cottages and an inn of the sign of the 'Fox.' Centuries gone by the village had been more extensive, but as the habitations decayed and fell into ruin, the *debris* was removed and the land enclosed for farm cultivation. In this way the entire village might in time have disappeared from the face of the country. A new, a wise,

and rich landlord came and found work for the cotters, and consequently the cottages were kept in tolerable repair. They were scattered about in groups, but blanks amid them showed where cottages had once stood, though now the plough passed over their sites. The few old men and women about the lanes used to sun themselves at the doors in summer, or slumber over the embers in winter, and found it very difficult to die owing to the salubrious temperature of the hillside, where happy chance had thrown them. They all lived to a great age. In hot weather they lay about in the sun like, when beheld afar off, so many huge blocks of granite. Some old men were blind with years, and these would stand against the door-posts resting on staves: and venerable crones would stow themselves away in corners, in spacious antique chairs, where they were little in the way of the rising generation, and seemed to bid defiance alike to time and death. During hard frosts they doubled themselves up for a month together, seldom using speech for very lack of having anything to talk about. Fourscore years was looked upon as a comparatively youthful age. These aged villagers were not generally considered past work much under a century old. They kept to the field work until they dropped into the furrows and were carted home for good.

Old Dame Higgins kept her feet to the last, and thanked God for the favour, which however worked ill to many. She was as active as a sun-witch, and more to be dreaded than twenty goblins. It was surmised, about the period of the Italians settling down at the Manor House, that this old woman had ensconced herself in her



chimney-corner and laid up for good : and happy had it been for the people of the big mansion owned by Farmer Byles if this had been the case.

In the long night of pitchy darkness which followed the arrival of Carlotta, wind-storms raged and howled and shook the very rafters of the humble dwellings of Barton-on-the-Hill. There had been nothing resembling the hurricane in the memory of the oldest of the hinds, and, to add to the terror which the elements inspired, strange voices were heard in the blast, and young men came in at night from fold and field with wild eyes and hair on end. Farmer Byles and his household had kept the secret of his tenants profoundly. Not a soul knew about the harpist and her harp. The old fellow had conceived that the music formed an element in the unpopular doctrines which he had promised Dr. Campo to keep secret from the neighbours round about. When the Doctor came not, Carlotta had reason to be dull, for, saving her staid mother, she had none to converse with. Lucy tried to understand her six words of English, but it was long before anything like companionship and exchange of ideas could be established. In my visits on errands from the town, I have seen them sit and gaze upon each other in very agony for lack of words to express their thoughts to one another. But whatever little acts of endearment could avail them were not wanting. And then there was the ever-present harp, whose voice was seldom mute ; and in this way Carlotta came near to express the feelings and sentiments of her ardent nature : for she procured from the town an endless assortment of homely ballad airs, from which the household would select the familiar ones, and the harpist

mastered them in a trice. It was surely magic, thought the humble people of the Manor House. The harp seemed to speak the language which remained a mystery to the player ; and often would the tears come to the eyes as some plaintive tune spoke in slow cadence from the strings, and change to sudden mirth when the lively dance or jig burst forth in contrast, like sparks of fire thrown wildly off from some revolving orb. The varying notes seemed to affect the character as well as imagination of Lucy, whose faculty for poetry and song were delicate, and often would she catch up the air of some quaint ditty which she had heard the rustics sing at her father's hearth. But when alone in the spacious hall of the mansion the enchantress would yield to the spell which dated from and had bound her as it were from the womb. For the Signora Campo, the mother, had strangely dreamed that her offspring would become famous in the use of many stringed instruments, even as the choir of angels in heaven, and then when the winter winds swept over the moors Carlotta would, with what seemed superhuman power, pour forth those weird fantasias which carry the hearer captive in a tempest of sound.

These were the strange voices which had startled the hind on his way from meadow and fell, and roused the lonely beldame as she rocked to and fro in her corner, and carried dismay into every home save one, to wit old Mother Higgins's. She alone knew the secret of the Manor House. She chuckled as she learned the reports of the villagers. She said it was the witches' dance that was heard, and that the queen-witch was none other than the foreign woman whom Dr. Campo had brought from France and kept chained up in the haunted Manor House.

CHAPTER XIII.

SERJEANT BELSIDES AT THE COMMON ROOM.

WE must leave the rural community for awhile in order to return to the tower of St. James's where Dr. Campo dwelt. As a matter of certainty, Higgins had given a graphic description of what he had seen at the Manor House—of the Doctor in company with two pretty girls, one of whom talked French, as the spy said; and how that, at parting, the Professor kissed both girls. All this and more found its way to the Marshal's and Proctor's ears, and created a consternation. It was generally reported and generally commented upon by the scouts and fellows, and reached the undergraduates, and called into play the legal talents of a couple of barristers of the Foundation, who spent during their visits much of their valuable time in the common room of St. James's. Old Belsides, after his twentieth glass of grog, became excited on the subject of the Doctor and his Manor House *protégées*. He could not keep his seat owing to the violent fits of laughter which seized him and nearly split his sides.

'William,' the under common-room man, had enough to do that night to supply the lawyer with carefully brewed toddy. It was 'William, fill it again,' and 'William, fill it again'; and then the never-forgotten addendum, 'And mind, you rogue, a clean glass.'

Old Belsides was remarkably nice about his glass, and liked a clean one with each succeeding supply, and knew, moreover, however far he might have gone in his

potations, if the waiter tried to palm a dirty glass upon him for a clean one. 'Take it away, you rascal,' he would cry, 'take it away, and bring me a clean glass.' 'Fill it again,' and 'Fill it again,' he would shout as he lay under the table long after the others had gone to their rooms. He would for awhile appear unconscious, and then a piece of some special pleading, a fragment of some case in which he had been retained, would escape him in a broken, disjointed manner, yet withal worth listening to, for Serjeant Belsides was a genius. He would brow-beat a witness, cross-examine him, tell him of the awful nature of an oath, ask him if he really comprehended the fearfulness of that sacred compact, and all this while he lay on the Turkey carpet under the mahogany table where he had slid from his easy chair. And it was thus that he resumed his speech or stated the case of the Manor House scandal as reported by Higgins.

'On your oath, sir, do you tell the Court that the foreign woman with the black eyes knelt down before the picture, and that a lamp was hung from the ceiling?'

'Stop. You said, I believe, that Dr. Campo kissed the maidens all forlorn, like the man in the child's story book.'

'Good! Proceed! What saw you next?'

'By the bye, you say this all took place on the first floor? Pray how came you to be in the first-floor back?'

'Oh, you stole the ladder from the straw yard and looked through the casement. Good, very good! Very amiable fellow, upon my word; credit to the Proctor's court and the convocation of venerable scholars and divines!'

‘So you looked into the sanctuary through the window. What did I understand you to say about a harp?’

‘The lady played upon the harp—eh?’

‘Good, very good! don’t harp upon that point any longer—middling good pun?’

‘Fill it again, you rascal. Let the water be scalding hot, and not too sweet—and mind you, dog, a clean glass.’

Now, by one of those strange accidents which will happen, Dr. Campo had arrived late from the Manor House wet and cold, and fearing for his health, and seeing a light in the common room, he had, an unusual thing with him, gone in to get a glass of hot brandy and water. He entered in his usual quiet way, just as old Belsides had descended under the table, and consequently heard all the disjointed but significant observations which the learned pleader had indulged in relative to the Doctor and his perplexing *protégées*, so that it might be regarded as somewhat miraculous that the capsized barrister escaped with a whole skin. Although the Doctor, as a naturalised Englishman, had never carried a dagger, yet he was hardly the less Italian, and passed his hands about him instinctively as if feeling for that ancient instrument of revenge among his forefathers. A moment’s reflection, however, made him grateful that he had resisted the influence of the evil spirit which would have led him to blood-spilling, and he called the servant and inquired what could be done with the prostrate barrister.

‘It is a common thing, sir,’ replied William, ‘with Mr. Belsides, when he comes down to shoot. I have to

get him home to bed in the best way I can. He pays handsome for the trouble he gives. He is very rich.'

'Pity,' said Dr. Campo, alluding rather to his habits than his fortune.

'Who says I'm drunk?' inquired the voice under the table. 'I'm not drunk.'

'Let me assist you home,' said the kind-hearted Doctor.

'I want no help,' exclaimed the horizontal barrister; and, in order to prove his words, he tried to rise, and succeeded. Upon this he made a desperate rush to the open door.

'There,' he shouted. 'I told you so.'

He tried to descend the steps, and got half-way down when he came down with a heavy thud on the mid-landing of stone.

'There,' he repeated as he lay; 'I'm not drunk.'

Dr. Campo stood aghast; but the prostrate barrister continued his statement of the 'Great Campo Case,' as he termed it.

'John Higgins is your name, eh?'

'What's in a name, oh! oh!'

'You stole the ladder from the straw yard, eh? Very good. Peeped into the lady's chamber? Marvellous effrontery! Any father might be proud of such a son. The gentlemen of the jury will be quarrelling among themselves which shall have the credit of adopting you.'

At this point Dr. Campo determined to carry the special pleader bodily to bed, and proceeded with the aid of William to do so. The Doctor raised the pleader's head from the stones, and a servant took charge

of the legs, and thus, being able men, and the helpless one far from robust, they proceeded through the garden to the other side of the quadrangle, where a lamp on the second floor marked the apartment where the loquacious follower of Bacchus resided when in college.

The pleader opened his eyes, and recognising the light of the lamp, 'I see the moon,' he exclaimed immediately, confounding the lamp with that luminary.

William, unnecessarily, as the Doctor thought, told Belsides that he saw the lamp on the staircase of No. 7.

'It's false,' cried the Serjeant. 'It's the moon. I ken her horn.'

By-and-by the bearers put their load to bed, and locked him in for safety. The last words that he uttered while the Doctor was within hearing, were :

'My lord, I have the honour to appear before you. Great case. Campo versus Higgins. Renowned astronomer—Latin scholar. Vulgar, illiterate clown—ordinary spy. Domestic sanctity—distinguished foreign *artiste*—crowned heads of Europe—honoured at every court—come to seek repose in this sequestered nook of happy England. My lord, we all need repose. Arduous life—professional renown. William, you dog, fill it again, and bring a clean glass.'

CHAPTER XIV.

A FROST SCENE WITH FIGURES.

THE morning after the forensic effort of Serjeant Belsides on the Turkey carpet in the common room of St. James's, the meadows surrounding the Manor House where the harpist and the innkeeper's daughter resided presented an animated and picturesque aspect. Dick, the farmer's son, had instinctively shown much delicacy in his behaviour towards the unhappy girl Lucy Dell. By some his manner might be construed into indifference, so seldom did he cross the path of the young ladies in their rambles during the dry, hard frost, which left the high land and oak wood accessible, except on a change and during a heavy fall of snow. Dick rose long before daybreak and swept the paths in the old-fashioned garden sheltered by a thick yew-tree hedge, and sanded all the paths, so as to render them agreeable to the feet of the damsels, should they feel disposed to breathe the morning air.

I have said that Carlotta was born in Holland, and that her mother was the daughter of a Dutch merchant. Among other accomplishments Carlotta had acquired the graceful one of skating, an exercise much in vogue in her native country among the ruddy women. Farmer Byles was a little startled when he heard that Dick had orders to go into town with a pair of my lady's boots in his pocket, with a view to having them fitted with skates. He had seen one or two amazons performing in that way on the meadows city-wards ; but no real lady that

he could remember had ever learned the art, and he would have felt no more surprise had she commissioned him to procure a set of boxing-gloves or single-sticks. Still he held his peace, for Dick would have gone through fire and water for Lucy's friend. And it was surprising how soon the rustic girl began to show signs of returning health under the tender and sympathetic nursing of Carlotta, to see whom was to become her champion and her slave. Carlotta's form was of the most perfect type. Tall, but not to a fault; slender, but not spare; her complexion olive; her teeth as ivory; her hair like the raven's; her eyes black as the sloe—she came upon you like an enchanting vision. Nothing like her had been seen in these parts. Old Byles said the 'nearest approach he had set his eyes upon was the swarthy, dark-eyed daughter of Richard Lambert, the gipsy king; but he thought the gipsy girl not nearly so well built.' Leda had such ankles, Venus such a waist. It was a glorious sight to behold her sailing over the frozen lake, making a thousand graceful curves becoming a goddess.

'She be more than mortal,' said an old woman who came to the Manor House. Equally pleasant was it to see the simple English girl wait upon the bank in very wonder at the amazing evolutions which her strange friend performed upon the ice; and ever and anon she winged her way with the speed of lightning across the waste beyond, and as far as the eye could reach, until she seemed a speck no bigger than a crow, and then with equal speed would she come back, her dark hair streaming in the wind.

She wore on those occasions a pelisse of matchless fit, fringed with costly sable, such as Northern princesses

wear, and on her head a pretty hat (which she had bought at Prague) with an eagle's feather, dirk-like, pointing upwards; and thus attired one would have gone ten miles to see her, as Farmer Byles said; and as she approached the bank her nostrils seemed to dilate and her eyes rain fire—two wondrous gleaming orbs. Thus she went gliding past as Ceres skimmed over the golden corn, happy in her liberty as the wild roe on the mountain, happy in the security which the enclosed and silent meadows of the Manor afforded.

Fearing not to give the rein to her enjoyment and her sport, which became her like a passion, a sentiment, a grace, she thought herself secure from prying eyes; and such had been the case for a time. What then was her astonishment as she turned a corner from behind the yew-tree fence at the top of her speed and beheld Dr. Campo, accompanied by Farmer Byles and a stranger, who needs no introduction to the reader: it was none other than Serjeant Belsides, whom, as we have described, Dr. Campo had benevolently put to bed in his boots over-night.

The professional life which Carlotta had led, and the unconscious way in which she had passed her happy pastime on the ice, enabled her to meet with charming ease the Doctor and his friend the barrister. The Doctor was a little puzzled at first, for he too had acquired English notions of propriety; but when the niece, in good flowing French, addressed herself to the Serjeant-at-law, and told him that she had come to England to do as the English did: but that tempted by the frozen lake her early passion for the pastime of skating had become irresistible, and more so that she had deemed

herself free from observation, saving from her dear friends the Byles's; thereupon the famous pleader, nothing wanting in fluency of good Parisian dialect, entered into a defence of the Dutch fashion which gave such graceful enjoyment and healthful excitement to the fair sex in the wintry time.

Farmer Byles had been sent by his dame to call the young ladies to dinner, which had been laid in the large hall on the first floor where blazing logs lit up the spacious chimney corners. The old lawyer stayed to dine, and did justice to a dish of game from the preserves near at hand, which Dick had taken care to provide.

The appearance of Serjeant Belsides at the Manor House it is not difficult to account for. When he arose from his bed in the morning he, according to his practice sent for William of the common room to inquire what had taken place over-night, and then it was that the servant informed him of his speeches concerning the slanders upon Dr. Campo, and how the Doctor had heard all and winced under the infliction. It was then that the pleader (a humane, high-minded man) made his way at once to the tower, and sought an interview with the Professor, and in the most frank and ample manner pleaded for pardon, at the same time stating that, whatever might have been the feeling he displayed in his midnight burlesque, certainly he would own, in his right senses, that all his sympathies were with the Doctor, and that at the dinner previous to his speeches he had taken sides with the Italians against the pro-proctor, a pragmatistical young fellow, who had introduced the subject at the table of the common room; and he added that he was prepared and determined to see Dr. Campo well through

the effects of the wicked and ridiculous reports so common in the city of Gothic buildings and Gothic prejudices. At the same time he advised the Professor to court publicity, to invite friends openly to his rural retreat, who would thus be enabled to frown down the slanderers on his domestic life. Dr. Campo immediately closed with the judicious pleader's suggestion, and insisted that he should set the example, and be the first distinguished guest at the Manor House, where he promised the sporting barrister should find good shooting, good eating, and excellent music into the bargain. Hence the appearance of the Serjeant-at-law on the frozen meadow of Farmer Byles.

CHAPTER XV.

THE COWHERD AND HIS FAMOUS HERD.

IN a meadow, or rather series of meadows, beside the silent winding Cherwell, whose flowery sedgy banks inspired the classic muse of Tom Warton, there formerly roamed a herd of huge oxen. The river on one side, and the fences high and double on the other, enclosed these famous pastures. Where at intervals the hedge offered a convenient spot of rest, the gentle brutes would come and recline their huge heads and look out upon the passing rustic, and their spreading, polished horns would gleam like the crescent moon relieved against the blue hills beyond. And sons of toil envied those passive brutes their freedom from care, as they chewed the cud at

leisure, too indolent to open their eyes, often closing one and keeping the other but half in use, seeing things dimly as in a dream, and being satisfied with that. Fear to them was unknown, no poaching wight was permitted to go near them, no yelping cur suffered to agitate their nerves. Their way of life in time gave confidence and immunity from fright. If you passed they heeded not your presence nor moved one hoof to make way. If they lay upon the ground among the grass, clover, and sorrel, they made no objection to your sitting upon their broad flanks. Heedless, blissful state! In winter they were housed in comfort in well wattled barns amid mountains of straw and racks of hay and clover, turnips, swedes, and mangold-wurzel. Such was the incomparable existence of our classic herd, which like Apollo's was well guarded. An old, deformed, lynx-eyed cowherd had them in charge until, in due time arrived at maturity, they fell one by one sacrifices upon the broad oaken tables of the Gothic halls, whose spires and pinnacles might be seen afar off at eventide glistening like a thousand gems. Even in death the feelings of the dainty brutes were considered: an unseen hand let fly the unerring bullet which ended the happy life. Thus were the rich juices secured to the sirloin, to be enriched and enhanced before the glowing embers of hazel boughs cut from a neighbouring copse.

Farmer Byles owned the famous herd, and the herdsman, noted for his vigilance, was his trusted servant the husband of Mother Higgins, and grandfather to Higgins the Proctor's runner and slanderer of Dr. Campo and his friends.

As in the higher walks of life dislikes will spring up,

so among the lowliest, little hatreds will separate man and wife even in extreme old age. So it was with the herdsman. Nothing would have done his old heart so much good as the news that his gossiping, slanderous, old dame was in some flagrant way disabled, and she on her part would have survived the report that the tough old cow-keeper had come to grief.

By arrangement the dame called once a week at the Manor House for her bit of money, which her husband had by mutual arrangement agreed to give her on the strict condition that she crossed not his path. For the matter of lodging he left her the entire run of the cottage and undertook to do for himself. With this object he had constructed a small hut at a remote corner of the straw yard where in winter his herd was housed, and here he lived, moody and reserved, sparing of his words, but with his eyes on the alert and his ears awake to every sound. He had his nightly rounds, and year by year the fences which enclosed his domain grew more and more dense and impervious to intruders. He deepened the ditches and wove the blackthorn and briar until they defied the outer world.

At the extreme point of the pastures, where the moor began, and the wild winds howled over the waters in autumn and scattered the snowflakes upon the surface of the frozen flood in winter, was the weakest point in the herdsman's territory. Hence an ox had been stolen by some desperadoes who had come from the moors, and hence the extra vigilance required at that spot. It was while on his rounds on the day when Carlotta first appeared on the ice that the old watcher was startled by the strange and to him unheard-of spectacle of a lady

skating. She swept past the spot where he stood with the speed of the bittern when roused from the marsh by the report of a gun. Wildly she passed, her hair borne on the wind like the streamer on a tall mast at sea. Carlotta, the beautiful, caught sight of the deformed herdsman, and with the courage and confidence which oft belongs to the beautiful she checked her course and returned to the spot, and steadying herself by aid of the hurdle fence, she smiled her sweetest smile, and wished the old fellow 'Good morning.'

'Good morning, neighbour,' said she.

'Marning, mam, smartish marning, mam, this marning, mam,' was the rustic acknowledgment.

'Very cold,' continued the lady.

'Where be thee bound for?' asked the herdsman.

'I live in the Manor House.'

'He be my maister's place.'

'Your wife, I am told, comes to the Manor House.'

'That be the reason why I doan't,' was the reply.

'You do not love your wife,' added Carlotta.

'I don't doat upon her for sartin.'

'Will you not come out to-night to the Manor House?' Carlotta asked presently.

The old man hesitated.

'I stranger—not speak English—you not understand? I repeat you will not eat my bread to-night?'

The old man still hesitated.

'You will be my friend, good man. The people in the village me not love. Your wife say bad words of me.'

'D—— her! I beg thee pardon, mam. She be a cross-grained un, she be. Were an angel to come from above

she'd belie her. I tell thee what to do. When next thee do set eyes upon her, tell her from I that if she drops an ill word about thee, why tell her the cowherd will come to the cot with a bit of blackthorn. Tell her that, and do thee notice how she takes on about it. I'm sorry I can't take a bit of supper with thee : for why, you see, mam, the chaps on the moor be on the look out, and so I must be too.'

'No matter,' said Carlotta, determined not to be thwarted in her hospitable intention. 'You shall have some bread and meat and wine sent to you. Master Dick will bring you some at night. You shall drink my good health—you shall drink Master Byles's good health.'

Such was the first, the first great effort which Carlotta made in displaying her progress in the English language, for which her matchless ear served her well.

CHAPTER XVI.

SERJEANT BELSIDES AND THE HARPIST.

WE return to the Manor House, where, dinner being served, the famous Serjeant Belsides found himself beside the harpist, and opposite a sirloin of ox-beef, which the farmer had sent for into town some eight or ten days before. It was of his curing as he remarked.

The Serjeant spoke little during the first substantial course. It was admirable, he said at length. After

suitable delay Dick came in with a dish of dab-chick, moor-hen, and teal, which he had shot over morning among the sedge which fringed the river. The barrister pleaded hard to be excused, but being pressed he did justice to the breast of one of the teal, and picked the leg of a dab-chick. The repast terminated with a huge apple-pudding, in which the apples were not forgotten. All the women of the establishment lent a willing hand in preparing the feast, and even Lucy almost looked happy (which sent Dick beside himself) in her anxiety to be useful. 'It was,' said the Serjeant, 'the most happy day he had ever spent'; and Dr. Campo told the farmer, in Lucy's hearing, that 'he had reason to be proud of himself in being blessed with such a son.' Whereupon Dick blushed and the farmer looked happy. The elder women—to wit, Carlotta's Dutch mother and Mother Byles—came in at the close of the feast and sat by the fire. The servants kept to their posts in the adjoining room, which was in fact the kitchen, spacious and brick-paved, where the pots and pans were the only ornaments, and where, on racks above and around the walls, sides of bacon and hams were ranged, forming a picture of plenty such as pleased Madame Campo, with her domestic Dutch instincts, amazingly.

'Yes, Master,' said Farmer Byles, 'Dick be a good lad.'

Dick at the moment left the table. 'He be gone now,' continued the farmer, 'to the straw-yard, to take a bit of sup to my old cowherd. He forgets nobody does Dick, and he be liked by all the people hereabouts. He be the stay of his old father, and the prop to his old

mother, thank God. If he be happy in finding a good wife he shan't want for a few pounds.'

Hereupon Dr. Campo rose and proposed the health of the Byles family, dwelling upon the virtues of each very briefly and very gracefully. The dame blushed and curtsied, and old Byles thanked the Doctor heartily.

In conversation Carlotta, to the astonishment of everyone, spoke in English, making herself understood pretty well, committing indeed some very amusing blunders, at which she laughed herself heartily, and made Lucy laugh too. The Doctor was in high spirits, and Serjeant Belsides became very witty and droll, and nearly killed the farmer with the recital of anecdotes which came within the comprehension of the people among whom he found himself.

Thus the evening pleasantly and unsuspectingly wore on, and the time arrived for the company to return to town. Then Lucy and Carlotta looked grave and the household uneasy, as loth to part with such good company.

Carlotta had much to say to the Serjeant, who had declared himself 'her champion for ever. To his dying day,' he said, 'he would wear none other colours on his sleeve.' This was not in the style which the farmer could realise, but he seemed nevertheless to enter into the feeling intended to be conveyed.

'Tell me, pray tell me, Mr. Serjeant, what I am to do with the strange people about here who say naughty things of me: and what shall I do to the insolent students who come and stare at me as I walk out, and what to do with the syndica of your town and his dread-

ful sbirri who come and look into my window by night ? It is dreadful. You will speak for me, Mr. Serjeant : you will save me, you are eloquent my uncle says.'

'Signora,' said the pleader, 'what is all my eloquence ? It is as empty bubbles blown windward when compared to the power you possess in your own loveliness. I am retained as your counsel. Yet you speak for yourself better than any words of mine can in your cause. Go forth, Signora, and where is the man or woman who will not seek the favour of your good graces ?'

'You cannot do less,' said Dr. Campo, 'after a speech so polite from my friend the Serjeant, than play one of your grandest fantasias for his gratification.'

Straightway the cover was removed from the harp, and without hesitation the taper fingers of the harpist swept over the strings, and, lo ! entrancing music filled all the house and stole out over the wintry waste, and reached the cotters at their hearths, and cast a spell upon the hearers one and all. The learned Serjeant became as a child : his thoughts wandered away and settled down upon a distant spot where a cottage gleamed in the setting sun. It was his childhood's home, and joy was there, and in his heart, and all the lawyer vanished ; and then came a turn in the strain as if the chill air of the moor had entered the hall, and the lamp burned dimly, and clouds passed over the sunlit home, and sadness and sighs filled all the space with a strange unearthly dirge. So the mighty player willed it as she exercised the power within her which had oftentimes drawn tears from the eyes of tyrants.

'God forgive me,' cried the eloquent pleader in

rapture. 'I will burn my gown, for what are the gold-bought words upon which I have prided myself—what are the famed powers of pleading we boast of but as the tinkling of pots and pans compared with these weird strains which in ten minutes can change a man of stone to an infant, and lead him heavenwards or hellwards as this siren wills?'

At this moment the door was thrown open, and Dick, white and breathless, entered the hall.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN OLD LOVER APPEARS.

INSTEAD of taking the old herdsman his supper to the straw-yard, Dick had gone thither and persuaded him to come to the house and enjoy his 'bit of sup' over the kitchen fire with the domestics. It was thus in company that they came after dark into the walk that led straight down to the yew trees. During their walk Dick had related to his companion the particulars of his discovery of his grandson in the capacity of spy to the Proctor, and of the old Dame Higgins's inveterately spiteful conduct in spreading evil reports about Carlotta and Dr. Campo. Dick had his suspicions that the pair, the dame and her grandson, would be playing their parts on that particular night—seeing that something unusual was going on at the Manor House; and he and the herdsman very stealthily approached the house by a circuitous route which brought them near to it, in the rear of the build-

ing, where they were enabled to see without being seen by others who might be thereabouts. In order to encompass the house more effectually, they parted, each taking a different way and each armed with a crabstick.

They had not parted many minutes before shouts of alarm startled Dick, who hastened to the spot whence the noise proceeded and found his deformed friend threatening old Dame Higgins. At the same instant young Higgins crept past, a little way off, as if afraid to approach too near, to see what was the cause of his grandmother's outcry. In his fear he did not see the farmer's son until that vigilant observer had him firmly in his grip; and exceeding the example of the herdsman he dealt a shower of blows over the scout's head and shoulders. Dick was thus engaged when the Proctor and several runners appeared on the scene, to whom Higgins, who had acted officially as an advanced guard, appealed for protection. Dick lost no time in making his way by a back door to the hall, and suddenly appeared, as we have related, pale and breathless rather with rage than fear.

The Proctor was a youngish man of a spirited turn for an adventure. His instructions had led him to expect something unusual was occurring at the Manor House, and his duty left him no alternative but to visit the suspected place. It happened that in his office of tutor he had made the friendship of a young nobleman, and had indeed made the tour of Europe with him. The two being friends, it occurred that the noble pupil, hearing of the night's expedition of the tutor, begged to walk with him for company. They arrived

opportunely at the grounds of the Manor House, and so saved the young scout's bones from the cudgel of the farmer's son.

They entered the house together, the Proctor having sent in his name and official title to the farmer. The pair were immediately admitted and invited to take their places at the table. Carlotta, who instinctively saw that an intrusion offensive and intolerable had taken place, rose from her harp and led Lucy from the hall, her own eyes flashing with indignation. Her retreat was instantaneous, yet she escaped not the notice of the Proctor and the recognition of the noble youth who accompanied him. Lord Petrel had time to recall in Carlotta the glorious creature whom he had seen in Brussels during her triumphs in that city. He had fallen in love with Carlotta at first sight, and had dwelt upon the memory of her from that hour. In spite of his tutor's vigilance he had visited that night the Hotel du Rhin, where Carlotta and her father and mother resided, and had besought an interview and had been denied. Next day he waylaid Carlotta's father and frankly declared his passion, equally in vain. He had recourse to letters framed in the most honourable terms, but without success. The stern misanthropic father scorned his offers of rank and wealth. The banished heir of a noble house, Carlotta's father had felt the humiliation of being compelled to live upon the proceeds of his daughter's talents, and saw in the overtures of the young English noble but so many insults which it became him to resent; and it was while in this mood that he had repelled with scathing words the young noble's advances for his daughter's hand. Lord Petrel was stung into the use of words of retort equally fiery at a moment when,

unseen, Carlotta had approached the spot. Rank, wealth, life itself had been as nought to the young lord could he by their sacrifice have obliterated the bitterness of his speech. In broken accents, nay in tears, he tried to explain them, to withdraw them, to beg pardon : how vainly I need scarcely say.

The old man, for Carlotta's father had married somewhat late in life, suffered much from his excitement, and did not survive many months after the painful occurrence. But ere he died he sent for his assailant, and nobly pardoned him, and begged in return forgiveness for the insults he had himself first heaped upon the ardent lover. Not so Carlotta. Though met by earnest entreaties, and notwithstanding that the influence of two noble English houses were employed to win relenting words from her, she would never behold Lord Petrel more. Guess then the amazement of the noble youth when on entering Farmer Byles's hall his eye rested on the commanding form of the unyielding beauty. As she glided past him he stood like one demented and grieved at the disastrous circumstances of the meeting. One alone of all present knew or guessed the cause of Lord Petrel's overwhelming amazement. The Proctor too had seen Carlotta, and had come 'simply to learn who and what manner of person the strange lady might be who had created so great an excitement and scandal in the University. His astonishment was little less than his pupil's when he saw the Italian harpist and recognised in her the lost idol of his pupil. All the doings of the fatal night in Brussels, and all the consequences thereof, came fresh upon his mind when the door which led from the dining hall into the corridor closed and Carlotta was gone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

INTENSITY OF LORD PETREL'S LOVE.

COULD Farmer Byles have foreseen all the troubles that were to befall his peaceful home by the reception of Carlotta, it might almost be inferred that he would have had the rooms empty even at the expense of his son Dick's life almost. But as time wore on it was wonderful with what force of affection the hearty yeoman took to the two girls who in contrast represented the olive and the rose. It was difficult to say which had the stronger claim to the first place in beauty. The Italian girl's complexion was of that perfect, evenly fused tone which tells with so much effect in a picture. Such faces are common in continental galleries, but unknown in England. On such a complexion the features have greater emphasis when moved by the passions, inasmuch as the lights and shades, so to speak, fall upon an even surface; whereas, the variegated hues of a Saxon countenance, in which carmine, purple, and pearl seem blended in every degree of variation, serve but to confuse the play of vein, muscle, and tendon. The English Lucy was not without spirit, and would now and then give proof of her earnestness; but nobody feared her in the least, and for the same reason we have given Carlotta, on the contrary, looked all that she felt. Her face was an effective dumb show from which a Raphael would have made immortal studies on canvas for every kind of subject; Lucy on the other hand would have served

merely for a sweet Virgin Mary or angelic model for St. Catherine.

But whatever the difference in outward aspect the two girls presented, in heart and soul they were united, and the old farmer learned to love them both as his 'darters'; and in consideration too that Dick's happiness depended upon Lucy, he vowed within himself that he would stand by them both until his last penny was gone, and in spite of all the proctors' runners and vice-chancellors' courts too. He became enraged at the Proctor, whose intrusion had brought a pleasant party to a dismal close. He told those about him that 'he (Farmer Byles) would have the gown off his back afore he'd done wee'm.' The appearance of Lord Petrel in the official's company, and his strange and alarming behaviour on his recognition of Carlotta, produced no particular effect upon Dr. Campo, who had learned all the history of the Brussels love-affair from Rubrinotti, and afterwards more in detail from Madame Campo, Carlotta's mother. Serjeant Bel-sides on the contrary was very much astonished, and left off telling anecdotes and looked grave. He appealed to the Proctor, to Dr. Campo, to Farmer Byles, for an explanation of the mystery in vain. Dumbness appeared to have afflicted them all. At length, from compassion, Madame Campo, who seldom spoke to anyone, led Lord Petrel to a seat and applied restoratives such as she usually carried about with her. In vain, the young nobleman remained in dire unconsciousness of all around him. In this state he was carried into a chamber, while the hunchbacked herdsman, who was present, got the fleetest horse in order, and Dick galloped off for medical aid two miles thence. The Proctor dismissed his

runners into town, and gave directions to the Marshal to wait upon Dr. Fell of Christchurch at daybreak with a letter marked 'urgent.'

Lord Petrel was a Christchurch man.

It was with heavy heart the Proctor took his place beside the bed of his unhappy friend that night.

CHAPTER XIX.

STRANGE MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE.

THE orderly habits of the Manor House had been changed since the harpist had taken up her abode in it, but in one respect no alteration had been made. Winter or summer the farmer went to bed early, and rose at daybreak all the year round. The force of habit was so effective with the staid people that, in spite of the commotion in consequence of the coming of the Proctor and Lord Petrel, they went to rest as the clock struck nine. All that Lord Petrel required was sleep—so said the surgeon whom Dick had fetched through the sleet and snow. With this assurance the Serjeant and Dr. Campo left.

The Proctor shuddered as he took his post in the bed-room where the young noble was carried. The moments passed by very slowly, and dismally too. His walk through the meadows had prepared him for sleep, but sleep he felt was out of the question with so onerous a charge as Lord Petrel on his hands, who, moreover, kept shouting in his sleep in a manner terrible to a

lonely watcher in a strange house, and that house an ancient lumbering place associated with strange stories of bygone times, stories full of mystery and tinged with the hue of crime. The chimney corner was spacious and the chimney so ample that the snowflakes found a way down and made hissing noises on the hot brick pavement, and now and then a puff of smoke made a sudden start a sort of necessity on the Proctor's part. He rose to look out upon the moor where all was storm and terror and the blackness of midnight. Only one small spot of light on the side of a high wall seemed to tell of life within. This light was clearly reflected from a casement in the house and near at hand. The Proctor would have opened the window of his own apartment, but the wind howled so mercilessly against the panes that he forebore. He went out softly into the long corridor into which the bed-room opened, and listened. At first he was only conscious of the lusty snore of Farmer Byles, who had not composed himself so comfortably as usual.

A lull in the farmer's breathing enabled the listener to detect other sounds, and even to make out words of broken English breathed from Carlotta's lips, and some few words spoken in Italian. It was the Italian olive parting with the English rose; the one proceeding to repeat her brief familiar prayer, the other to prostrate herself before the shrine of the Virgin, a shrine glowing with the splendour of genius. The Proctor was excited by the sounds which now fell upon his ear, in accents scarcely audible, in slow, soft measure, troubling the grim mansion. It was Carlotta's devotional hymn in which

she commended herself to the protection of the Virgin Mary.

All that is here told is derived from reports current at the time, and which, owing to my close attendance upon the Italian Professor, came to my ears before they reached the outer world.

Here follows an episode which is somewhat strangely conceived and described, and which in all probability the author would have re-cast had he lived to give the story the final revision of which he fully recognised the need. Under these circumstances, the editor has thought it best to omit this portion of the narrative, and merely to state that in the original manuscript, the Proctor, exercising an unjustifiable espionage, becomes witness of certain strange and weird occurrences which lead him to suspect Carlotta of practising sorcery. He uses the knowledge thus dishonourably gained with extreme malignity, and causes so grave a scandal concerning the Professor and his relatives that they are forced to break their ties with Oxford and move to London, where the next chapter finds them established.

PART II.

CHAPTER XX.

PROFESSOR CAMPO IN LONDON.

NOT far from Pall Mall on one side and Piccadilly on the other was a silent locality favourable to the needs of professional people connected with the musical and dramatic world. A row of massive five-storied houses, and a high blank wall, the back of a public edifice, formed a broad paved court so situated as to be almost removed beyond the sounds of street traffic. Here foreign artists, guided by advertisements inserted in theatrical journals on the continent, formerly proceeded upon their arrival in England to fulfil season engagements at the Opera House and fashionable concert-rooms. My first acquaintance with this quiet dull place was made by night when I arrived in the company of Dr. Campo, and his niece Carlotta, and the widow of Count Campo. And when I say that only three days had elapsed since the midnight adventure at the Manor House, where the Proctor lost his reputation and nearly his life at the same time, it will be conceived that only extraordinary circumstances could have necessitated so sudden a departure from the University of the Professor

of Astronomy, and of Carlotta, the harpist, and her mother from Byles's farm.

Dick Byles arrived in town in the course of a few days with a waggon-load of luggage, including the harp and the mysterious elongated case which had been removed by night to the cow-shed and thence to London.

Carlotta was in ecstasies when she beheld the faithful swain come tramping down the court, whip over shoulder, smiling beneath his broad-brimmed felt hat; and when, with the assistance of a couple of porters engaged from a neighbouring mews, the harp-case was fairly placed within the lady's chamber she hardly knew how to express all her gratitude to the youth who had performed so long a journey for her sake, and who with just spirit refused all remuneration.

'No, no, young lady,' said Dick, 'thee be heartily welcome to my service, and I be well paid if I have given any pleasure to Lucy Dell's best friend.'

Here the Professor interfered, exclaiming, '*Per Bacco!* but he is a true knight,' and added, 'If my niece cannot prevail upon you to accept some little acknowledgment for the great service you have done her, myself, and the Countess, at least I will receive no denial. Take this and keep it for a token that we all love you. I would to heaven it were in my power to serve you in a more substantial shape.' Saying which, Dr. Campo took from his own neck a massive gold chain, to which were attached some curious relics and an ancient watch with enamelled case, and put it over the neck of the young waggoner after the fashion in which it should be worn.

Dick's resistance was useless. There were three to one in persuasion, and he was compelled reluctantly—

yet how modestly—to accept what was so heartily and gracefully forced upon him. He stammered out his thanks and blushed all over as he gazed at the beautiful relic of ancient workmanship.

‘And now,’ said Carlotta addressing the young man, ‘while dinner is preparing, do you come into my room, for I have a secret to tell you which you will value more than the gift which my uncle has made you,’ saying which she put her arm within Dick’s and led him to an adjoining apartment, where she took from the table a letter which she had just received from her friend Lucy at the Manor House. Breathless as he was with the excitement of the hour and the conflicting feelings which had been his on renewing his acquaintance with the friend of Lucy, yet he had intense attention to give to the epistle which Carlotta took up to read. It ran as follows :—

‘My precious friend, my Carlotta, I am sad, very sad, now that I am alone. The house is not like itself. Indeed we are all very sad now you are gone. The elder people too are anxious for their son, who in this terrible weather has set out at midnight with the team no one knows where : but I guess, Carlotta, he has gone somewhere in the hope of serving you. What a generous heart he has ! Carlotta, I love you and think of you every minute of my time, and therefore I love Dick who is noble and kind in serving you my friend. For months past my life has passed like a dream, I have seen things as we see them in sleep by night, but indistinctly as it were : but have I been deceived on one subject in which my hope of happiness in this world depends ?—and but

for you, Carlotta dear, I might have pined away in utter hopelessness. Do tell me, Carlotta, have I deceived myself? Is it true what the maid here tells me. Is it true, do you think, that the true-hearted Richard Byles loves Lucy Dell, the unhappy girl who in her despair found welcome and comfort in his father's house? Pray God it may be so. Write soon to your

‘Loving friend,
‘LUCY.’

With that tact which a woman can so well exercise, Carlotta contrived without actually reading the letter to him to give Dick an idea of its purport which she well divined it would be a kindness to let him know. The effect of the communication was to start Dick on his way home at a very early hour on the following morning. Meanwhile he spent a memorable evening with the Italians in their quiet London apartments, and heard, not for the last time by many, the notes of the mighty harp which kings and emperors had thought themselves privileged to hear.

CHAPTER XXI.

TOWN LIFE QUITE NEW TO THE PROFESSOR.

PERHAPS in all London a more simple man than Professor Campo did not exist. His life had well-nigh been passed in the University where the reader found him interested in the rookery and in rearing starlings.

Therefore he was hardly more at home in the busy streets of the metropolis than a child, and so far from his affording protection to his niece, it rather devolved upon Carlotta to protect her uncle. Her experience had been manifold while he had passed the life of a recluse. Two days had barely gone by when the Doctor grew restless, pacing up and down the room without intermission. It was true his books, of which several cases had been brought with the other luggage, served him to pass an hour or two, but he missed his quaint window, the gardens, and birds. He contrived to coax to the window-sill an ungrateful sparrow, that looked upon the Doctor with a most impudent suspicion as he snatched the bread-crumbs and made off—so different to the unfledged starlings in the leaden spout of the tower, who opened wide their throats for the morsels which their friend gave them.

The Professor was just the sort of man to be victimised. A German musician who made his acquaintance on the fifth day of his residence in town sold him a worthless watch at a large price. It amused the Doctor to wind up the trumpery thing and to shake it to make it go ; but he soon got tired of this. He next attended at an auction mart, where old pictures were sold twice a week, and where a good many buyers were 'sold' too. The Doctor knew a little of pictures, having inherited a couple of masterpieces from his father. In fact each member of the family appears to have possessed a fine picture or two. Carlotta had a Bellini, which she converted into an altar-piece while at the Manor House, as already described. In like manner the Doctor had his Raphael, a small Holy Family which he treasured

amazingly, and kept in a black case lined with crimson velvet. With so perfect a standard always at hand it might have been imagined that the Doctor would not easily be deceived by a counterfeit. Yet such was the case, and he was so much impressed by the sentiment of a composition described as from the pencil of Leonardo da Vinci, that he never thought about touch and texture—and after a month's possession, wishing to get rid of his bargain, he had to do so at the loss of nearly the whole outlay.

Poor Professor! He soon spent the amount of his fellowship—now his only income: for on quitting the tower of St. James's he resigned his professorship of astronomy, which brought him in a respectable income. The fellowship was a trifle. And thus he went on. As he had no means left sufficient for buying pictures, he took to collecting carvings and china. He came home one day with a piece of Capo di Monte, as he called it, an old battered shield, and a dagger with half a hilt. And when he learned, as he did in a day or two, that the whole were modern, he wished that the dagger had been better pointed, in order that he might make an end of the idiot who had suffered himself to be deceived so egregiously—meaning thereby himself. Still he went on feeding daily that impudent cock-sparrow, and a stray cat—an equally suspicious and ungrateful recipient of his bounty. The one would not approach the window-sill for his bread unless the donor hid himself, and the other would not touch the morsels of meat until the giver had retired to a distant part of the room.

It may seem singular that the affair at the Manor House, so far as I could learn, had no sort of interest for

the Campo family. I never heard them speak of things which happened there, or in connection with the University, Lord Petrel, or the Proctor. Nor did anything in their manner betray any concern upon these subjects. We lived pleasantly. Dinner was sent in from a neighbouring restaurant, and Carlotta's French maid prepared coffee. For myself, I waited upon the Doctor, hand and foot, and could not, in my own mind, do half enough for him. I should never have been able to have penned this history but for Dr. Campo, who from the first kindly began affording me instruction in English; and by degrees I caught the sound of a score of Italian words. As time went on, I somewhat augmented the stock, and in the end learned to frame a few common sentences in hourly use, but never got beyond this.

I often went out with my master by his wish, and I could learn that Carlotta and the Countess were anxious that the Doctor should not go out of sight alone. One evening a matter of business led him to pay a visit to the restaurant which supplied our dinners—an establishment called the Hotel di S. Marco, not far from the Haymarket, in a by-street. I had occasion to return some articles, and followed the Doctor without design into the small but brilliant saloon. The visit led to a troublesome state of things for the Doctor and his relatives. It was clear from the moment that the Professor entered the place that he was ravished by its splendour. The master of the house came forth with a hundred bows, and smiling in his best manner met the distinguished visitor and begged him to honour his poor tenement by taking a seat if only for a few seconds, and could he prevail upon the noble signor to sip but one

glass of magnificent sparkling hock, which had just come in.

In a moment, before the grave scholar could well speak, the table was spread with fruit and confections and bright green glasses.

‘I have hoped and prayed that good Dr. Campo would pay his poor countryman a visit like this,’ said the crafty Venetian landlord. ‘My boldest wish is fulfilled. To your good health, illustrious signor!’

Thus far I heard while I waited to pass into the kitchen, where from curiosity I stood watching a furious Frenchman concocting omelettes. What was my surprise when, on leaving, I looked out into the saloon and beheld my grave master in conversation with a young girl, whom I had frequently seen in the place, and moreover this same girl was in tears, which, added to her youth, astonishing beauty of feature, and slender form, might have troubled the soul of that distinguished contemner of human comeliness, St. Cyril himself. What could it all mean? I stepped back into the kitchen, from which, through an aperture, I commanded a view of the room in which the interesting group, consisting of the Doctor, the Signorina di Venezia, and the master of the establishment, were conversing together. When next I caught sight of the group the master was gone, the late Professor of Astronomy and the damsel remained, and the latter, apparently calmed down under the soothing influence of my master’s admonitions, was earnestly stating to him her grievances.

As, spy-like, I gazed through the aperture, all intent upon what I beheld—I was too remote to hear what the young lady had to say for herself—the furious French



cook, having sent in the omelette, approached my hiding place, and began to enlighten me on the subject of 'la bella fanciulla di Venezia.'

'Poor child,' he began, 'it is good she find at last a friend. She come to London for the dance of Drury Lane, and she is the very best dancer in the Europe. Well, she make one agreement with the lessee. Dam! He not good man—dam! He tell her he not want her now. He not pay the one play for the ballet for which he promised to pay for the week—eight pound. Dam! He now not want her for two month. She no money, no home, no father, no mother—dam! The lessee one rogue, ha! You see, I hear the good man Dr. Campo—he has un big heart. He will go—he is going: he kiss the signorina's hand. Good! he will go. I hear him tell the master he will go to-morrow to lessee and make—'

Here the furious Frenchman ceased and closed the little square door in consequence of the master's approach, but I had time and opportunity for observing that the ex-Professor of Astronomy, whose benevolence extended to unfledged starlings, suspicious ungrateful sparrows, and outcast cats, had not been able to resist the tearful, pale, plaintive face of the dancing girl. As he came near it was easy to perceive that he placed gold coins in the master's hand, and by his movements it was plain that he intended the amount, whatever it was, to be employed for the girl's good: for, seizing his hand, and in a way absolutely resistless, she carried it to her tiny mouth and imprinted on it twenty kisses at the lowest computation.

A moment after, I followed in the Doctor's wake through several gloomy streets and up the paved court

whither he bent his steps lightly and cheerily, singing as he went. His heart was glad. He had found something to engage his sympathies.

CHAPTER XXII.

POOR PIETRO LOST AND FOUND.

EARLY next morning, while the Countess sipped her coffee in bed, and her daughter was lost in the study of new music, the Doctor assisted me to lift a certain case, lined with crimson velvet and containing an heirloom, into a cab at the end of the court; and taking me into the vehicle, he ordered the driver to put him down at a celebrated auctioneer's, who advanced money on first-rate works of art until a sale could be effected in the regular course of business. I saw the auctioneer smile with unquestionable inward satisfaction as he handed the Doctor a pile of notes. The picture, as I learned in after times, was worth 10,000*l*. Seeing the Professor in possession of so much money, and knowing, for the fact was beyond doubt, that he had squandered away a large sum of ready cash in a very short time, I determined to take consultation with somebody on the subject, although I ran great risks of being thrown out of the window by my master should he come to discover that I had been meddling with his affairs.

Whom to consult, that was the question? I had heard the Countess ask if Serjeant Belsides was in town

but a few days before, and she had been told that he was not.

I would have given a quarter's salary for a sight of Dr. Belton (whom the reader will call to mind), but that was out of the question : to write a letter upon so critical a topic was, at that time, beyond my capacity. However, I begged for a couple of hours to go out on some errand on my own account, and started, as instructed by a stranger, for the Temple. I passed through Covent Garden on my way, and stayed to look at the winter fruit and flowers, and while I amused myself with these tempting objects I heard a voice which startled me in an extraordinary manner. It recalled to me old times, instantaneously as thought travels back to pleasant places—as the sun suddenly bursts through the clouds and gilds the landscape below. Before I could recover from my surprise I was in the arms of Pietro di Pisa.

When I had opportunity to look at him I could have wept outright for pity. So old, so worn, so poverty-stricken, had he become, poor fellow !

‘Corpo di Bacco!’ he cried, when he had recovered his breath. ‘Where have you been? Where is the Professor? I have worn myself to a shadow looking for him. I have spent all my money to the last farthing. I have not eaten for two whole days, nor slept God knows how long. In another hour I should have dropped in the street.’

In five minutes from meeting with my old friend I had him in a coffee shop, with rolls, butter, and coffee on the board, wine and beer, and everything I could call to mind, and in addition a couple of steaks down at the

fire. At first poor Pietro looked at the food rather with repulsion. He was 'off his feed,' he said, but presently he came round and ate heartily. It was now my only fear that his ravenous state might require more caution than he could command; but he seemed to bethink himself upon the same thing, and slackened his speed. Roll and butter, wine, steak, and ale, gradually disappeared, and Pietro di Pisa found heart and voice, and felt his limbs grow once more strong under him. And now there was no detaining him: to the Doctor was his cry; and to the Doctor we went.

We found him coaxing the stray cat with new milk, and bestowing many endearing terms on the ungrateful beast. I made two steps in advance to announce the wanderer. The Doctor turned his head, and seemed not to comprehend my meaning, and even when his eye rested upon the wretched figure by my side, Pietro was the first to speak.

'Master,' he cried, 'do you forget Pietro di Pisa, your vassal, your slave?'

When Dr. Campo found speech, he said, 'I know not what to think. Am I in a dream? I left Pietro my friend in health and spirits but a short time since, singing merrily, like the birds in summer woods: and now a wretched man appears before me, wobegone, ragged, and wild of aspect, and calls me master, and says he is Pietro di Pisa. Is it possible that I am deceived? No. It is indeed my old friend and follower. But how is this? Do you tell me you are broken in spirit, and worn threadbare, and all in an hour, as it were?'

'Master,' said Pietro, in a low, calm voice, 'I have been a wanderer for many a day seeking for you. I

heard slanders uttered against you and your noble house. The town rung with slanders against you, Carlotta, the Countess. God preserved me at that time, or there had been murder done on a grand scale. The knife glittered in my hand. It may have been but weeks, but it seems years, since I departed from that accursed town, where men are miserable in their coward meanness. Since then I have tramped the roads and streets. Pietro never had wealth. A few shillings have served me forty days and nights in this vast place, where no eye has pity for the outcast, and yet I am alive.'

At this point the poor fellow burst into tears, and the Doctor took him in his long arms and carried him to a couch. It was twilight when we reached the Doctor's lodgings, and candles stood ready on the table. Luckily I was there, and less moved than the two Italians: for watching my master I observed him bring forth, after fumbling in his pocket, a crumpled roll of paper, or rather, as the fact was, of bank notes: and in an instant he had twisted one of them and darted to the fire to obtain a light. I sprang at him and held back his hand. It was the bundle of notes I had seen the auctioneer hand to him, and I had even marked the pocket in which he had deposited the roll. My activity saved the Doctor fifty pounds: for on untwisting the paper he held in his hand he discovered the mistake he had all but irrevocably committed.

The discovery calmed him as it appeared, for now he deliberately set about what he intended to do. He called the Countess, Carlotta, and the French maid, and sent for a foot-bath and hot water, and wine, and taking off his coat, he with his own hand removed Pietro's sole-

less boots, and, like an apostle of humanity, he became the servant of his servant. So did Michael Angelo sit by the bedside of his faithful Giachimo in his last hours. In vain Pietro resisted. He had to submit. Nay, the Doctor took the sable-trimmed robe, which he had taken from his own back, and put it upon Pietro, and then all was silent for a time, and Carlotta threw her arms about her kinsman's neck and kissed him, to show how fondly she loved his noble and generous heart.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PIETRO ENLIGHTENS THE PROFESSOR.

PIETRO soon recovered from his fatigue and exhaustion so as to be able to render himself useful, and the first sign he gave of being once more himself was by a descent into the basement of the house, in company with myself, and with a view to ascertain the state of the kitchen range.

With a very small outlay Pietro contrived such conveniences as were necessary to prepare meals for the family at home, in order to save his master from being victimised by the landlord of the Hotel di S. Marco, whom Pietro very soon discovered to be a great scoundrel, and no cook. I was saved the trouble of relating to Pietro my suspicions on this point, for a week had barely gone by ere he saw, in the affecting incident of the dancing girl, one of the wily plots of the master

of the hotel, who, with an eye to effect, had always a pretty damsel attached to his establishment prepared to probe the depths of the hearts of sympathetic old bachelors. It was not long before an opportunity was afforded to Pietro to convince even Dr. Campo that he had been the victim of deceit: and this he did by taking him to a very low dancing saloon in the neighbourhood to witness the plaintive young creature capering like mad with the furious cook of the Hotel di S. Marco, and at intervals indulging freely in iced champagne, doubtless out of the proceeds of the sympathy of the ex-Professor of Astronomy.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE HARPIST'S TRIUMPHS.

THE arrival of Pietro entirely changed the state of affairs in our hitherto gloomy mansion, for one of that ingenious youth's successes was to find out Signor Rubrinotti, the opera singer who sang at the Commemoration at the University, as already narrated. We had parties then consisting of select friends of the famous singer, and foreign connections of Carlotta's then present in town; and to do Pietro justice, he cooked very well: not like a Frenchman, but remarkably well for an Italian from Pisa. His dishes were not always digestible, but they were invariably savoury.

He cooked fish in fifty ways, and vegetables in various fashions; but his great feat was performed upon

duck, out of which bird, with the addition of vermicelli, he realised a dish not far short of sublime. Light wines and coffee (in which latter article Janet's talent wanted nothing) completed our social banquets, at which Pietro appeared in jacket and apron of snowy whiteness. He prided himself also on preparing Neapolitan macaroni with rich gravy sauce and Parmesan cheese. The proportions of this dish were so nicely balanced that a grain more or less of salt would have greatly depreciated its merits. 'It was exquisite,' said Rubrinotti. 'It was refined,' said Dr. Campo. 'It was unbearable,' said Dr. Belton, who made a special visit to town to see the ex-Professor of Astronomy on business matters connected with the Foundation of St. James's, Oxford.

As might have been gathered from Pietro's wild words, the University had found excitement and food for scandal in the story of Carlotta's life at the Manor House ; and the adventures of the Proctor and his 'runner' had been magnified into horrible doings on the part of the foreigners.

The Doctor had been set down as a second Dr. Faustus, and his tower in St. James's, where he chiefly occupied his leisure in polishing lenses and making astronomical calculations, was regarded by the superstitious with awe. Even the common-room people looked upon the adventure of the Proctor with a gravity which was ominous for the fame of the ex-Professor. Dr. Belton struggled hard against the prejudice which assailed the fair fame of his friend Dr. Campo ; and old Serjeant Belsides made some of his keenest thrusts at the Proctor's party, while Lord Petrel took his name off his college books, and refused all communication

with his tutor, to whom he traced the slanders. It was at the height of this ill feeling towards the Italians that Dr. Belton came to town and took his place at the dinner table, and expressed his opinion freely of Pietro di Pisa's 'foreign kickshaws.'

While consultations were carried on between the two Oxford friends, matters of no less importance were arranged between the harpist and the singer. It was the determination of Carlotta to recommence her professional life, and the only difficulty was to reconcile her uncle to the scheme. Rubrinotti was delighted at the prospect of wealth and fame which would necessarily accrue from Carlotta's exercise of her genius. For while the Doctor was kept in uncertainty as to the cause of his niece's absence on certain evenings, when she left home to fulfil her engagement, he was indeed so much absorbed in studies of his own and in attempts to entertain his friend Dr. Belton, that he did not miss the harpist. Pietro and myself accompanied Carlotta by turns. A careful man from the music seller's carried the harp, and a hackney coach was hired to take the harpist. The young lady's first appearance as an *artiste* in England was in a large mansion near Cavendish Square, where at that period the most select concerts were given, and at which only the *élite* of society were present. The reputation of Carlotta had gone before her, and the bare mention of her name had created an excitement in the musical world. I remember that a distinguished Scotch nobleman took a prominent part in making arrangements for Carlotta's appearance, and that he met her at the door. No words could describe her queenly looks when, throwing aside her

sable robes, she ascended the platform covered with crimson velvet, and took her place at the harp amid the breathless silence of a hundred guests of rank and fashion.

She seemed utterly unconscious of all around, and sat in profound meditation—a muse in marble. Her mantle of silk differed not materially in hue from the olive complexion of her rounded arms, which were bare, and of her face, which was a sight for the gods. It was enough for me that I had the keeping of her robes. A few notes from some instrument, I know not what, a squeak from the violin of a German fiddler, announced the opening of a sublime fantasia which had left its echoes over the wide continent of Europe, and had more lately startled the hinds on the Berkshire hills. It seemed as if the very earth was rent by the vibration of those tiny strings in bursting torrents of sound. And what was the effect upon that select world of rank and fashion? In what respect did they differ from those startled Berkshire boors on the hill side? There was terror in their blanched faces at one moment, and rapturous joy the next; and pensive sadness took the place of calm delight; and rage succeeded, or generous emotions prevailed, as the mighty player willed.

‘God bless her!’ exclaimed Lord Granitstoun, as he approached the throne as a slave to the Eastern despot’s feet. ‘God bless her! but this is more than mortal; this is of heaven, and thou art divine!’

Carlotta smiled upon the nobleman, whose words were meant in all sincerity; and waiting only for the quiet which succeeded to the tempest of applause, she drew herself up and leaned forward, as if to reach with

greater ease the further strings, and began a set of Scotch music of lightsome airs, intermingled with war-like strains, such as everyone present had known through life, but mended and heightened by so exquisite a finish that they seemed no longer familiar, but came like new and strange measures, and every heart leaped with delight, as the new harp of the North awoke the slumbering recollections of childhood, of youth, and love, and war, and all the glorious inspirations of old Scotland.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PROFESSOR AND THE POOR ACROBATS.

ON the evening of the concert of which I have spoken, I heard the Countess narrating to Rubrinotti the curious circumstances attending Carlotta's birth. Carlotta's mother was still beautiful, but of a beauty quite different to her daughter's. She was a tall, fair woman, and in her widow's costume called to mind a magnificent portrait by Rubens of Helen Forman, which is preserved at Blenheim Palace, only that the Countess's face was of a graver aspect than that of the Flemish painter's wife. Indeed, the widow of Count Campo had settled down, as Dutch women only can, into a staid matron at the age of forty. The character and ways of her late husband had been little in harmony with her early, calm, Dutch habits, and in his day her life had been a whirlwind. While he lived it was one long pilgrimage from city to

city, and a thousand schemes were projected by that irascible Italian, and discarded almost as soon as conceived. Yet she followed him through all his vagaries, and in her simplicity believed him wise. Only sometimes tears would come unbidden to her large blue eyes, as she thought of her child and of the wandering life that awaited its advent to the world. It was at Prague that she gave birth to Carlotta. She had been weeks in that city, while the Count pursued some wild design for grasping untold wealth. And often she sat alone in the rude inn by night, and the Count came not home for days and days ; and in her helpless state her thoughts would wander strangely, and visions fill the lonesome room with golden light from heaven, and angels came and whispered hope ; and in these fair dreams she saw her unborn child, as it seemed to her, in glory, bending over an instrument with many sparkling strings, and hosts of people, spell-bound, gathered listening round her. Three times she beheld this vision in her dreams, and the idea gained strength and was not to be ignored. At length her child was born in loveliness more than human, and her earliest toy, bought by the Count her father, was a tiny harp in deference to the mother's harmless whim ; and by-and-by a larger harp was bought, and masters hired, and all that wealth could do and opportunity afford were given to Carlotta. As yet one half the dream had been fulfilled. The mother had rested in the fond hope that her daughter would one day prove a second providence to her parents in their need, and so it proved. The Count fell sick, and troublous times set in, and then the wondrous girl took her harp upon the stage, and won renown and riches.

Such was the story of the Countess—and Rubrinotti doubted not its truth.

After the great success described, the *artiste* was sought for far and wide, and through her agents she received most flattering tidings. She had invitations from the highest personages of the land, and it was thought that no terms could be too high which could secure her presence at evening parties. To tell of all her triumphs would be but a lengthened repetition. She came home from noble mansions and royal palaces wealthy in bright jewels and presents poured in upon her from all parts; and all hearts welcomed her.

Thus fared the goddess of the day, and meanwhile the noble Dr. Campo, when he heard of his niece's triumphs, as in time he did, felt not the ignominy of the thing as he at one time would. His own fortune had gone low, and he had now no wish—no right to bar the way to honest independence in his niece's case. Day by day he gave, in his peculiar way, some further proof, if further proof were needed, that he was indeed a rare good man; and had the learned body, whose hasty judgment and Gothic prejudices had driven him from his proper home and sphere, but known him truly, there had never been those strange surmises and astonishment expressed as to the reasons which could induce such men as Dr. Belton and Mr. Serjeant Belsides to defend him and serve him in his retirement with so much zeal: for down at Oxford the war still raged between the Proctor and his party and the friends of the renowned ex-Professor of Astronomy.

Meanwhile Dr. Campo stuck to his congenial calculations, and followed his charitable instincts, regardless

of what men said, which his own heart told him was untrue. At the end of the court where he lived was a larger house than those which formed the row, and this spacious edifice had been converted into a private economical hotel, for the comfort of the lesser lights of the opera and the drama. Here acrobats and dancers found a home provided for them at a low rate by an indefatigable German landlord, who had been a waiter and had acquired a thorough insight into the wants and necessities of the hard-working, thrifty caterers to the public taste.

At the period when Carlotta was carrying all before her, and the Doctor was more than usually alone and moody, there came to lodge at the German Private Economical Hotel a large family of Spanish tight-rope dancers, or rather the troupe consisted of two distinct families. It appeared that, by the time that they were well settled in the hotel, their money was all gone, so that if an immediate engagement were not secured they must starve, and there was no help for it. It was touching to see them, as we could see them, for they occupied the rooms nearest to our own, trying to make up a scanty breakfast with a loaf and water. There were several children, who took their parts in the exciting and terrible feats on the tight-rope, or in some feats of tumbling, which helped to eke out the nightly performances, when the party were fortunate enough to have any engagement, and of all the beautiful sights which could be pictured in the fancy of human beings, nothing ever surpassed that of the group of poor strollers as they sat at their meals, and with the humility of true Christians, thanked God fervently for the crumbs which fell to



their share. Orlando, the little boy, would come under the window, which was nearest in the angle to our own, and gaze out with his large hazel eyes, like a cherub in a picture by Murillo, and his mother, fit model for the divine Madonna, would watch her little bantling with a look of ineffable sweetness; and then would come forward a little girl to match; and then they would prattle by the hour in that soft Castilian music, which no one can hear unmoved, unless he be a bailiff, or a hangman.

What then were the emotions of our ripe-hearted Professor, when he became conscious of the presence of the needy tumblers and tight-rope dancers? He bethought himself to make another visit to the auctioneer's, and to draw still further upon the masterpiece by Raphael. But no time was to be lost. He opened the casement very softly, as if he thought the children had wings, like the artful sparrows, and might grow suspicious and fly away. Alas! their hunger had instinctively brought them to the light to look out for help, being, as it were, but a prelude to their descent into the street to ask alms of the passengers. One alone of the troupe had at that time employment: a fine, manly fellow, and he had nightly to risk his life for a mere pittance. Thunders of applause and a few shillings were his nightly recompence. At first the Doctor, who had coaxed wild birds to eat out of his hand, brought some pretty pictures, and held them up for the inspection of the children; and by degrees, before the day was gone, the ex-Professor and the little dancers were sworn friends, and it was pleasant to see them in dumb show, which they had been taught as part of their calling, give

the Doctor to understand that they loved and regarded him. And then the Doctor tried some few words of Spanish, which went but a little way, for they were perhaps spoken in an accent very different to that employed by the natives of the province whence the wanderers came : but all served to make up an acquaintance ; and by-and-by the Doctor, learning that the elders had left the room and that the children were alone, again tapped at the window and brought cakes (which Pietro had made) dainty and warm from the oven, and these he passed to his young friends by means of a small wooden baker's peel, which Pietro had contrived for our small oven. And this was all managed with so much delicacy as to offend no one, for making sure that the cakes were in the hands of the little boy and girl the donor withdrew and closed the window. The cakes were avowedly for the juniors, but in reality they were enough in quantity and to spare for the whole troupe. The Doctor's gratified feelings may be better understood than described. I saw the tears start to his eyes as he left the window.

Next day the children did not come directly to the window. Anyone with half an eye could see that the parent strollers were modest people, and instinctively refined in their behaviour ; and doubtless, while thankful for the generosity of their good neighbour, they had no wish to impose upon him, or to permit their offspring to appear, or be, exacting. Yet it was easy to perceive that the mother had some difficulty to keep the children from the window ; and ever and anon they would peep from behind the curtain wistfully. The Doctor was in agony all the morning, owing to the restraints thus put upon

his new pets. But there was no help for it : the pride that belongs to the very poor is often stubborn. In his kindness the Doctor had made these children prisoners, and deprived them of the amusement of looking down the court, which was some solace. However, by degrees the order of things was changed. Hunger again set in, and it was no longer practicable to keep the little people out of sight. The boy came first, and then the girl, more bashful, stealthily crept out. At first they made it appear that they expected some one to come down the court, but this trick soon wore their patience out, and by degrees the window slid up, and they were once more face to face with the Doctor, and it so happened, by arrangement doubtless this time, that the elders of the troupe were again absent ; and Pietro being ready with a huge cake and the baker's peel aforesaid, the process of the cake changing possession was but the work of a moment, and once more those large black hazel eyes beamed sweetly bright as on the canvas of the old Spanish painter. And thus things went on for days, and the women could no longer hide themselves from one who had been good to them and theirs, and the mother of the children came modestly to the window and thanked the Professor for his presents, and promised that she and her children would name him in their prayers.

As I said, but one, the father of the children, had obtained an engagement, and that a very poor one, doing little more than pay the rent for the entire party. Before a week was past I and Pietro had learned all about them from the theatre and from the German landlord, and found that their condition was even more pitiable than we had suspected : for the men, on passing up and down

to their lodgings, carried themselves bravely, considering that they were all but starving. But the Spaniards are a proud race, and these men were from the province of Castile.

One morning the little boy and girl awoke and found themselves as good as fatherless. The tight-rope dancer of yesterday was a helpless cripple. He had been doing miraculous feats at the theatre in his worn, hungry state, and in the very midst of triumphs fell and sprained his foot in such a way that the surgeon who was called in declared, with perhaps little foundation for so alarming an opinion, that there would be no more tight-rope dancing for Signor Alonzo for many months, and that it was highly probable that he might never dance again. The pain of the foot was bad enough, but the surgeon's words fell heavily upon the sufferer's heart : he closed his eyes as if to shut out the thought of family and home. Pietro, as luck would have it, was present at the performance, and he hastened home to Dr. Campo without loss of time. And then it was that the best of men broke through all restraint, and brushed etiquette to the winds. He went with Pietro to the theatre, and procured a carriage to convey Signor Alonzo to his home ; and meanwhile Janet had been instructed to prepare the wife for the worst. It was long indeed before the dancer came round and was able to earn bread for his family, but at least he wasted not in despair, for daily the good Dr. Campo spent an hour at his bedside, and I need not say that Madame Alonzo and the little ones wanted not for anything, and truly their wants were few and circumscribed, but their gratitude to my master was unbounded.

CHAPTER XXVI.

REAPPEARANCE OF LORD PETREL.

DR. BELTON'S stay in town was short in consequence of his parish duties requiring his attention, and he was not the man to evade his responsibilities; but we had frequent visits from Serjeant Belsides, whose friendship for the Astronomer, his niece, and the Countess, waxed stronger day by day. It was long before the fact was known that the Serjeant was, in addition to his reputation as a fervent witty member of the bar, the author of several novels and a couple of successful dramas; and above all he had a large acquaintance with the leading players and managers, and took equal interest in the theatrical profession generally. No man was more sensible than he of the necessities of the lesser lights of that profession, nor more generous towards them. Guess then his delight when one evening he was attracted by the singular spectacle of Dr. Campo passing a huge quantity of provisions through the window of the poor Spaniard. He witnessed the operation from the court below, and bounding upstairs like a maniac he rushed at the Doctor and well nigh hugged him to death. When, moreover, he learned secretly from Pietro di Pisa the whole history of the Doctor's kindness to the acrobats and dancers, he made a big vow that before long the Doctor should return in triumph to the tower of St. James's in the University of Oxford, and become the most respected and revered member of that ancient Foundation. In fact the learned Serjeant had collected

evidence for a sort of trial, in which the ex-Astronomer was to be plaintiff. There was a mystery about Carlotta which even the Serjeant could not penetrate. The theory that the Proctor had indeed beheld strange things in the harpist's sanctuary at the Manor House, had gained ground, for in one respect that official's account of what he had seen had been unvaried, and he had become fully impressed with the notion that Carlotta was a dangerous sorceress: that he had beheld Count Campo in the presence of his daughter on the night of his stay at the Manor House was his unceasing assertion. The Serjeant sounded Pietro and myself on this point. I answered readily enough that I could not account for the Proctor's story, but I observed that Pietro, on being pressed for his opinion, grew restless, and evaded the question. To me it seemed plain enough that, whatever the nature of the mystery might be, Pietro was not entirely ignorant of it. One word would have cleared the mystery up, but Pietro could not utter it. The secret, whatever it was, was Carlotta's, and that was enough for Pietro. My thoughts reverted to the box which excited so much anxiety in Carlotta on her arrival at Blackwall and on her taking up her abode at Farmer Byles's house, but no solution of the mystery seemed to me capable of being extracted from such a source, and the subject was dropped and in a while forgotten. Then there was the strong infatuation of Lord Petrel, heir to vast wealth and a wide domain. Whether Carlotta was sorceress or no, his lordship was fairly bewitched. He had left college and wandered half over Europe without abating the ardour of his passion for the Italian girl. He had written to the Professor, to

the Countess, and to Carlotta without avail. Professor Campo advised him to abandon a passion which would entail on him the loss of his dear friend. The Countess could not plead for the young noble, and Carlotta was mute when the subject was mooted, but was plainly not indifferent to the interest and affection which the handsome nobleman had long entertained for her. After a while Lord Petrel made his appearance in the saloons of nobles and ministers where Carlotta's greatest triumphs were achieved, and it was said that he even approached her on these occasions to win her favour, and that her only reply was that she was but an artist, and far too poor and humble in position for the honour which was proffered her ; and yet not the less proud and unwilling to receive a favour from a high English family like the Petrels. And the near friends of Carlotta applauded her resolution, for they felt that, after all, independence was far dearer to a genius of Carlotta's order than riches and high rank purchased at the expense of liberty.

At length the presence of Lord Petrel in the neutral character of a friend was permitted at our lodgings, when Serjeant Belsides and Rubrinotti were present, and this privilege was accorded only on the engagement on his lordship's part that, at least for a while, the subject of his suit should remain in abeyance. It required all the tact of the Serjeant, who was favourable to the match, to get so great a concession for the noble lover ; but once settled, everything went on pleasantly enough for a time. Lord Petrel was only too happy to be in the presence of the poor artist, as she chose to term herself, but who in reality had come on her father's side, of a family which, reckoned by years, made the Petrel house seem like a

creation of yesterday. This was less than might be supposed the cause of Carlotta's pride. She had too much sense by far to lay her claim to distinction and respect save on the broad basis of genius and worth.

As a man of the world, Serjeant Belsides saw that a marriage with so eminent a man as Lord Petrel would be all that was requisite to turn the tide of feeling at Oxford in favour of the Professor, where the dons had not been well pleased with the secession of Lord Petrel avowedly in consequence of the prejudice raised against Dr. Campo and his niece ; and, in addition, they had felt the loss of the Doctor at the observatory, which had acquired a European distinction due entirely to the services he had rendered to the cause of science.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SPY AT WORK AGAIN.

THE enthusiasm with which Carlotta was welcomed wherever she went, and which found no diminution even at Court, was not so intolerably long in making itself felt in the silent abodes of Oxford, and more especially among the aristocratic class. For some reason or other many sons of the nobility had been entered at St. James's, to the mortification of Christchurch, and the reason for this caprice was stated to be none other than that the Dean of the latter Foundation had risen from nothing by sheer dint of application, aided by great natural

powers. This of course was a weighty crime, and the ancient nobility showed a proper resentment in not debasing their sons by placing them in an establishment presided over by one whose only claim to the honour was founded on profound learning and unswerving morality. The subject of Carlotta and her lover formed the favourite topic of remark at St. James's as a matter of course, and many versions were given in respect of the nature of the friendship which had been formed between Carlotta and Lord Petrel. The juniors, with few exceptions, applauded the young nobleman for his pluck; but the dons shook their grave heads and would listen to no excuse for a member of so distinguished a family as the Petrels demeaning himself to the level of a minstrel, however famous. Serjeant Belsides winced when these reports reached him, and he took care that Dr. Campo should be kept in ignorance of them. The Proctor at Oxford was, on the contrary, in ecstasies at the turn matters had taken. He put himself to the expense of keeping his 'runner' Higgins in town to keep watch and ward over the Italians.

Higgins spent much of his time in a neighbouring ale-house during the day, and sallied out each night in the character of detective, for which he was qualified by nature and judicious training. The result of his exertions was that Dr. Campo was set down in the Proctor's books as the boon companion of acrobats and strolling players, the frequenter of low dancing-saloons, and as the friend and intimate of ballet girls: and Carlotta stood little in advance of her uncle the Professor.

Visits from Lord Petrel were duly recorded, and as professional engagements kept the harpist out late at

night, and her mother's suppers were eaten at a still later hour, it followed that Lord Petrel was reported as finding his way home in the small hours of the morning, to the disparagement of his health and discredit of the proud name which he bore.

The Proctor, grown cautious, doled out his reports with a sparing hand. He, however, managed to get the whole into circulation among the heads of the Foundation of St. James's. The consequences were considerable. Higgins's accounts were the theme of the common room, of the lodge, of the scouts, and of the scullery. It was scandal, and therefore at a premium. But upon reflection it was urged that nothing good had ever come from the spy, and many weeks had not elapsed before his reports waxed stale and were discarded as useless. Dr. Belton, however, who, being on the spot, heard the scandal in his visits to the college, was cowed for the first time in his life, and even Mother Atkins declared that she could not conceive why the Professor should live in such a dreadful place as London, and get such a bad character, and she thought it was time that he should get another housekeeper. It was even hinted by certain conspirators that the Doctor might be legally deprived of his fellowship; but this was opposed by the law-fellows one and all. It was clearly a bad precedent to set. Where the interests of law-fellows had to be considered, the employment of detectives and the test of personal conduct were not to be tolerated. The account of this reaction reached Serjeant Belsides while he was enjoying himself at an hotel in the Haymarket, and led to his ordering the obliging waiter to supply him with another 'grog,' a clean glass, and hot water as usual.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CONSULTATION.

THE Serjeant had his favourite room at his Haymarket hotel, and any intrusion by a stranger, however unintentional, was sure to be resented by him. One night he had bespoken this room for judicial purposes, and coming in late he discovered that it had an occupant, and one likely to prove troublesome, seeing that he had partaken freely of wine. The tippler was repeating passages from some Latin author in a confused way when the Serjeant first caught sight of him. He might have been a scholar and a gentleman but that drink had made him stupid. The Serjeant was disconcerted and uncourteous. Approaching the wine-bibber he persuaded him to take no more. 'You have taken too much already, my friend,' he shouted. The stranger tried to articulate some answer, but failed. However, the Serjeant elicited enough to convince him that he had to do with a man who had received a learned education, and this made the Serjeant the more anxious, as it seemed to William the waiter, to get the fellow gone, and in the Serjeant's impatience he grew angry, and paid the obstinate occupier of his favourite corner the doubtful compliment of saying that 'he had taken him for a fool, but he was convinced that he was only drunk.' Drunk as he was, however, the fellow knew that he had been insulted, and rose to demand satisfaction, and followed the Serjeant out of the room. The end of it was that the hapless and helpless individual

was placed in a hackney coach and driven home from a direction furnished by the master of the house.

The Serjeant was now satisfied, and took immediate possession of the room which the stranger had quitted. Whether the interloper was in any way an emissary from Oxford, and had accidentally drank himself into a state of general incapability was never clear. No sooner, however, was he quite away than the learned Serjeant was joined by a small, lean, wiry old gentleman, whom the waiter recognised as a famous King's Counsel. The meeting of the two pleaders was enthusiastic. The King's Counsel had spent the latter part of the evening at a party where Carlotta had electrified the company. He had gone by the express desire of his friend Belsides. He had not only listened to the harp, he had conversed with the harpist. 'If,' said the Serjeant, 'you had only seen her I had been content, if you have heard her play you are a fortunate man, and I congratulate you, but to have conversed with so gifted and beautiful a creature may be regarded by you as a piece of rare luck indeed. William, bring the snipes.'

The birds had been ordered for twelve, and were done to the second. On the removal of the bright cover, the dainty morsels were beheld exquisitely embrowned and inviting upon toast of an equally rich hue.

'I have hit your taste, I believe,' said the Serjeant; the King's Counsel admitted as much.

After awhile, William was again summoned, and this time he appeared with a dish of anchovy toast, and another of welsh-rabbit—very much to the approval of His Majesty's Counsel.

A small bottle of hock was but a prelude to pipes

and toddy at a later stage, and not till then did the two pleaders settle themselves to consider the matter for which they had specially met.

It was the Serjeant's office to put his friend into possession of the facts of the case, which we may conjecture was none other than the one pending between Dr. Campo and the Oxford Proctor. The Serjeant gave a hasty sketch of the cause which had compelled the Doctor, when a boy, to take up his abode with his parents in England ; and how he had been placed first at a public school and afterwards at the University, where he had earned the highest distinction attached to the noblest branch of science-astronomy, of which he had been declared the ablest professor living. He told of his solitary life in the Tower, of his humble domestic state, of his charitable deeds, of his humility in all things. Then was mentioned the time of the Commemoration, famous for the sublime essay in Latin on the Chaldæans which the Doctor had delivered in the theatre ; and how, by means of Rubrinotti the great singer, he came to hear of his niece and the Countess ; and how he had invited them both to England, and provided for them a romantic home within walking distance of Oxford. He told also of the love which sprang up between the Italian and English girls, and of the strange influence which the harp had exercised over the unlettered hinds. Last of all there came the history of Higgins the spy, and discovery of the sanctuary with the altar piece by Bellini ; of the account given by the Proctor of the appearance of Count Campo in the room, whom he believed had died in Belgium two years before. Nor did the Serjeant omit to sketch in the incidents of the passion of Lord

Petrel for Carlotta, and of the behaviour of her father to that nobleman. Recounting the impressions prevailing at Oxford touching Dr. Campo's career in London as recently reported to the Proctor, the learned Serjeant concluded with an eloquent panegyric of the Astronomer, and of his love of his old abode in the tower of St. James's, surrounded by his folios and his instruments; and implored his friend the King's Counsel to exert all his great gifts to confound the enemies of the good and learned Professor, and restore him to his old position in the University.

The elder barrister might have slept during the greater part of this recital for all the notice that he appeared to take of the Serjeant. But no sooner had the story ended than he roused himself, and in a quiet confident way observed that he was well acquainted with the defendant the Proctor, and had known him long as a shrewd yet conscientious man, and 'I am confident,' the learned Counsel proceeded to say, 'that if the Proctor declared that he saw Count Campo in his daughter's chamber, that the Count was there either living or dead. But where are your witnesses?'

It had been arranged that Pietro and myself should be in attendance on Serjeant Belsides at the appointed time, in order to ascertain if anything could be elicited from us to strengthen the cases of the Doctor and his niece. William the waiter summoned me first, and the Serjeant took my evidence of all that I had witnessed of the landing of the harpist and her mother—of their arrival at the Tower, of their residence at Byles's farm, and of their flight to London when the tide of prejudice had fairly set in.

In cross-examination the King's Counsel asked curious questions respecting the baggage and the shape of the parcels which Carlotta had brought to England, and upon receiving my answers he looked grave and reflective for the first time.

It was now Pietro's turn. He, however, spoke chiefly as to the Doctor's acts of benevolence to the pretended Venetian dancing girl, and in aid of the Spanish acrobats. So far as it went Pietro's evidence seemed satisfactory, and, as it afterwards appeared, he kept nothing back of which he had been an eye-witness; but it ultimately transpired that he could have told something, which he had learned from Janet the maid, which would have startled the questioner out of his propriety, and that had been no easy matter.

The astute old barrister clearly saw that Pietro had something upon his mind, which he was desirous of keeping back. The following question made this strikingly evident.

'Do you,' asked the King's Counsel, 'know of any one likely to aid us in this matter, more particularly in respect of the appearance of Count Campo in the chamber of Carlotta at Byles's farm?'

Pietro was mute.

'Young man, this is no light affair. Your good friend has been driven from his home and deprived of his rights by these reports respecting his niece, and I know of no sacrifice you can make in honour, which you ought not to make to clear up the mystery and remove this serious scandal.'

'I believe,' stammered the poor cook, 'that the scandal can be cleared up. To my poor mind the Pro-

fessor has never been to blame for anything. I know the ladies to be blameless, but in honour I cannot say all I think. One who is one day to be my wife I cannot involve in this, and between my love and my duty to my revered master I am between two stools, and Pietro di Pisa will come to the ground.'

Poor Pietro was both distressed and confused. He said at once too little and too much.

'You may go, Pietro,' said the King's Counsel.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE OBLONG CHEST.—THE DEPARTURE.

DR. CAMPO was indeed a child in heart. In his life-long retirement, and more especially in his studious life in the tower of St. James's, he had formed no estimate of men and things without. Hence, when he became the subject of enmity and calumny, he had not the skill requisite to defend himself from attacks, nor the courage to disregard or endure them. While he could find congenial employment for the exercise of his noble sentiments, he repined not for the old home of his learned leisure: but, this failing, he became melancholy. He called to mind the sweets of that seclusion which had been earned by his labours at college, and he longed to return to the Tower and to those silent walks where, as I have said, the shrubs are for ever green. Time had endeared to him his home in Oxford, where every sight

and sound, from the noise of busy rooks and chattering daws, to the sharp, crisp music of the bells, had become the cheerful voices of the hours and the signs of changeful seasons through the year. And there were those left behind who knew his ways and waited hand and foot upon him ; and there were those who could at least do justice to his learning, if not to his gentle, unsuspecting nature. When no object offered for filling up those blank hours which were his, he fell back upon common human instincts of sympathy, and, owing to his inexperience, errors multiplied upon him. He parted with his money, and not always with the discretion he had shown in the case of the acrobats. He drew and drew upon the credit of his masterpiece by Raphael until he had nothing to receive ; and when his means were gone he felt the pangs of remorse which flow from wastefulness. Oxford leisure and stillness soothed his soul, and if his self-banishment thence had for the hour gratified his sense of pride and self-respect, he now would bemoan like an unhappy lover the cause which had severed those associations which so many pleasant years had woven in his memory. It was sorrowful to look upon the ex-Professor in his despair. Serjeant Belsides pledged his reputation to restore him to the full possession of his old rights, honours, and happiness : but the slow process and doubtful legal issue suited not the sanguine temper of the lonely-hearted scholar.

Carlotta comprehended the sorrow of her uncle, and sought by change of scene and life to heal the wounds which she had innocently caused. Like as the traveller in the desert strikes his tent and hastens on his way when dangers threaten, so the brave girl, with an energy

grand as it was wisely directed, called the household together, packed up her worldly goods, and crossed the sea. The Professor, the Countess, Janet, and Pietro were of the party.

The night preceding the departure was kept in a solemn manner, as though the friends met at a funeral. Lord Petrel came in company with Serjeant Belsides, his friend the King's Counsel, and an eminent physician, medical adviser to Lord Petrel's family, and were received and entertained by the Professor in a long and serious conference, and I observed that after awhile they all ascended to the chamber which had been allotted to Carlotta as a sanctuary, and which was now lit with tall wax tapers ; and there was the altar piece, the lovely Madonna by Bellini, and all around, reaching from the ceiling, drapery descended in ample folds. On a raised platform, in the centre of the apartment, was placed the oblong chest which has more than once been referred to in the progress of this story. But now I noticed that the outer shell or case had been removed, displaying a purple velvet cover, studded with silver nails and other ornaments. The visitors' stay in the sanctuary was brief. When morning came a spacious travelling carriage drew up at the court, and the Professor, the Countess, Carlotta, and Pietro, and Janet were driven away.

CHAPTER XXX.

OLD PASTORAL SCENES REVISITED.

THE Professor had arranged for my return to Oxford to join the establishment at the Tower of St. James's, and I therefore packed up my few trifles, and bargained with a waggoner to convey me to that city, where I arrived in three days ; and on the whole a very pleasant way of travelling I found it. The spring had set in, and the air was fresh and balmy all the time. The waggoner took occasional naps and left the team to themselves : while by night I curled myself up in abundance of hay and slept soundly. We halted at wayside inns, and enjoyed our hour's rest and repast of bread and cheese in a way rarely relished by people of business.

Though I had experienced no great indulgence from Mother Atkins, still I longed to see her again, and perhaps also her rosy niece had something to do with my anxiety to get back. There were, moreover, my own relatives to see, and Dick and his betrothed to visit, whose wedding was announced to take place during the time of apple blossom. Altogether I experienced some impatience at the steady, slow pace of the waggoner's team. At length the towers of Oxford appeared in sight, and by breakfast time, on the fourth day, we crossed Magdalen Bridge, and wound our way round by the long wall or fortification, and up Holywell into George Street, where the warehouses of the carrier's master were.

It was arranged that the baggage belonging to Professor Campo should be sent on, and I set out on

foot to St. James's alone, and once more stood on the doorstep of the old lodgings, and overhead the cawing of the rooks attracted my attention, as it had done upon that morning when I first appeared upon the scene and brought my letter of introduction to Professor Campo from his friend Dr. Belton. Mother Atkins seemed eager and anxious as ever for her snowy pavement, which ran between the gate and the house through the front garden. She opened the door with a scowl, but on seeing me she relaxed into a smile, and her pretty niece came forth like a new-born rose to greet the wanderer. I had, of course, many questions of niece and aunt to answer, keeping back, however, what it did not concern them to hear. In the main they were content to know of Carlotta's triumphs and of the prospects of her marriage with a fine nobleman, for Pietro di Pisa had assured me that when next I beheld the harpist she would be Lady Petrel, and that they would arrive one day at the Tower in mighty pomp and circumstance, and turn old Mother Atkins's head outright. Hearing what I communicated, the housekeeper observed that 'perhaps, after all, things might turn out better than some folks had prophesied'; and her fingers instinctively found their way to those inscrutable curls which adorned the temples of the ancient dame, as though their perfection was some elementary part of any great occasion.

'Forsooth,' she continued, 'what will Mother Jones, the Dean's housekeeper, say to that; and what will the Dean himself and Proctor have to say against my Lady Petrel, and such a lady too? Why the Dean's daughter bain't fit to hold a candle to the Lady Petrel, and do you say that the Professor will be a nobleman? All I have

to say is he always bemeaned himself like one, whoever may say to the contrary. Life of me, but is it true, and do you think that Pietro was not joking?’

Upon being assured that Pietro was serious she grew restless, and eventually retired to her room, and arrayed herself in black silk bonnet and scarlet cloak to take a walk.

After some conversation with Katty, a trip to the Manor House was resolved upon. A glance through the window told me that Mrs. Atkins had not left the college but was gossiping with the porter at the gate, no doubt on the subject of Professor Campo's exaltation and of Carlotta the future Countess. So I hastened to her, to ask her permission to take her niece to the Manor House for a ‘jaunt,’ as the term went.

Permission being given, Katty soon appeared, clad in her Sunday attire. She seemed a lady almost, and by the poets of the district would have been styled a goddess. Her aunt had delayed her departure in order to see us off, and give her parting injunctions for our guidance. The stiles which impeded our progress were not a special grievance on that day. Our road lay through the meadows where the stream wound among hawthorn bushes, and the greensward was enamelled by the early daisies. In Farmer Byles' fields the lambs were frisking in the warm sun. We passed the famous pastures where the farmer kept his oxen. Old Higgins, the herdsman, looked over the fence and paid a compliment to Katty. The early spring flowers lent incense to the air. Violets white and purple covered the banks. Even now I recall that walk as though it took place but yesterday. It seemed as though we stood still, and

fields, lanes, and streamlets glided by: so rapt, so pleasurably dazed were we with the scenes of that morning.

At length we caught sight of the Manor House and the yew trees, and entered the straight lane, famous from time immemorial for its profusion of daffodils and snowdrops which grew on either side the way. Old hinds remembered when the embankments were cultivated as a garden. The garden had run wild, but the bulbs, deeply imbedded in the black earth, had multiplied a thousandfold, and each spring, when the rooks returned to the gigantic elm trees to build their nests, the earth beneath was as a sheet in whiteness on one side and as a cloth of emerald and gold spread out on the other.

Lucy, Dick's betrothed, was absent at the house of her parents, the 'Spotted Trout,' for now that her wedding was arranged, the Dean of St. James's and the parish rector ceased their persecutions on the subject of the young maiden being removed into a distant family for protection. Dick's cudgel was ample protection in case of annoyance from any undergraduate, should such occur.

Katty had been known at the Manor House from an infant, and my former visits rendered me welcome, if only for the sake of news I might be able to impart; and I was soon the subject of much inquisitiveness as to the late guests of the Manor House, and all were delighted at the promised happiness of Carlotta and her uncle. I remember that the old lady who officiated as housekeeper was highly amused at my appearing with gloved hands.

'Bless us!' she cried, 'it was but yesterday that the



boy came for his skim milk, and now he is as bold as may be.'

As for myself, I hastened to pay my duty to my parents, and in good time escorted Katty back to the Tower. How often has that bright, spring day recurred to my memory, and Katty's face of beauty, and a background of flowery lanes and fields, a picture without a shadow.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE RETURN TO OXFORD.—PIETRO'S STORY.

How different the unchanging sunshine of Katty's life to that of Carlotta the harpist, who appeared to carry anxiety and mystery with her wherever she went. At length, however, her career brightened. Already Dean, and Chapter, and Proctor, and learned tutor, regret that they have condemned unheard Carlotta and her noble kinsman. As spring advanced the Dean showed himself curious about the movements of Professor Campo and his niece. The Proctor had gone to Italy in company with his old pupil, Lord Petrel. This seemed strange when the cause of the Professor's absence was considered.

By-and-by the Dean told Mrs. Atkins that she might prepare to receive her master and other company, from whom, he said, he had received welcome news. By degrees the Italians again became subjects of frequent remarks, but with a very different feeling this time. At length it was rumoured about that Carlotta had really

become Lady Petrel, and that the modest Professor had himself assumed the title of Count.

‘It was all very wonderful,’ said the scouts at the Lodge.

‘Not at all wonderful,’ cried the staunch old housekeeper. ‘’Twas but as it ought to be,’ she said, ‘and some people ought to go down on their knees and ask pardon for the wrong they have done the great man my master—Count Campo that now is.’

At length, during the brief Easter holiday, the great gates of St. James’s, which were seldom opened, were unlocked, and by-and-by the party arrived. There were two carriages. The first brought the bride and bridegroom, Lord and Lady Petrel. In the second came Count Campo, Dr. Belsides, and the Proctor. The excitement was great for Oxford, where people are not given to excess in that particular, but it was pleasant to see the Dean and sundry Fellows come forth to greet their old Professor with what warmth of heart they could kindle.

Mrs. Atkins, her niece, and myself, were drawn up in such style as we could command, so as to make the most of ourselves, and were severally greeted with much condescension by the travellers.

‘God bless them!’ cried the housekeeper, when they were all once more in the Tower. And no less welcome were that happy pair, Pietro di Pisa and Janet his pretty French lady’s-maid, who made no ado in embracing Mrs. Atkins as heartily as if she had been related to her.

‘Not amiss that,’ said the old body to the porter who

was near, 'seeing 'tis the first time she ever set eyes upon me.'

'Tis the French way,' said the porter.

'I suppose so,' said the housekeeper, somewhat reconciled by the remark.

But if Janet the lady's-maid was free in her manner to Mrs. Atkins, what was she to Katty? She almost smothered her with kisses and choked her with bon-bons, very much to the delight of the English girl, who was somewhat weary of the monotonous life she had led at the Tower under the rule of her staid and antiquated relative.

At first Mrs. Atkins hardly knew what to make of Janet, but Janet was at no loss to know what to make of the housekeeper, having been well instructed as to that venerable lady's peculiarities, before her own arrival. Pietro was in 'good circumstance,' to use his own phrase, and did nothing but invoke Bacco and torment his old friend, whom he styled his 'Bella donna.' However, there was too much to be done to permit of much trifling in our quarters. The Professor, having removed his travelling dress, must needs descend into the hall to attend to the luggage, and this gave occasion for a grave dispute. Lord Petrel would not allow the Count to interfere, and the Lady Petrel insisted that her uncle should leave matters in her husband's care. With assistance from the Lodge we very soon got things in order. First there were sundry cases for the study in the Tower, and one in particular, which I recognised as containing the masterpiece by Raphael, which the Professor had left with the London auctioneer. This was well disguised by an outer covering, and at first the Professor

did not heed it, but at a signal from Lord Petrel, I and Pietro uncovered and opened it, when, lo ! the masterpiece appeared to the astonished gaze of Count Campo, who uttered a cry of delight on the appearance of the matchless relic, which he had supposed beyond recovery. His lordship had redeemed it, and now, without saying a word, put it in its old place in the Tower. The Count was touched to the heart by this act of his friend. Then came the harp, which also formed part of the luggage. But it struck me that the oblong package, which heretofore had caused Carlotta so much anxiety, was missing. Later, Pietro cleared up the mystery.

‘You must know,’ said he, when he found an opportunity for entering upon the narrative ; ‘that Carlotta, now Lady Petrel, comes of a great house, of a family who of old were lords of Ravenna, a city of Italy, my native land. But long ago, the Campi race were driven out, and lived abroad as they best could—sometimes in poverty, wandering from city to city. Count Campo, Carlotta’s father, married a burgomaster’s daughter in Holland, a quiet lady of domestic tastes, and quite unlike our people. She saw not beyond household habits. It is the way with the Dutch. Well, as you have heard, the Count became poor, and in the end, with wounded pride, he sank so low as to be beholden for support to his daughter’s talents. In Brussels Lord Petrel first saw Carlotta, and fell madly in love with her.’

‘Who would not ?’ cried the housekeeper.

Pietro proceeded : ‘Most people would have been glad of so ready a means of securing the succour so sadly needed : but the Count was of a strange turn of mind. He was urged by the Proctor, then travelling

tutor to his lordship, to discourage the young lord in his mad passion for a strolling minstrel, as the young lady appeared in the Proctor's eyes. The father needed not the appeal of the tutor. He rejected his lordship's proposal with scorn, for he could only see in the Englishman's passion the air and tone of patronage which he despised. He insulted Lord Petrel, and put himself so much about upon the subject that the excitement, following upon his cares and depression, proved fatal to him.'

'And his poor brother, the Professor, knew nothing about it?' cried the housekeeper.

'No,' said Pietro, 'the brothers had long been dead to each other. They quarrelled as boys, and parted. On his death-bed the Count called Carlotta to his side, and, as I have been told, would permit none other near him. I must tell you that he was superstitious to a degree quite unknown among the English gentry. He was a Catholic too, and very true to his religious observances. As the moments grew fewer and fewer which he could pass on this earth, he sent for a priest, and an eminent physician, an Italian famed for knowledge of the art of embalming the dead.'

'I hope you are telling the truth, Pietro,' said the housekeeper.

'God forbid that I should lie on such a subject,' returned the narrator, and went on with his story.

'The priest saw no harm in granting the request of the dying noble, which was that after death he should be embalmed after an old practice among the wealthy of my country: and from his dear Carlotta, whom he regarded as wholly of his race, he extracted a promise

that she would one day see his remains deposited in the ancient tomb of the Campi, which was within the precincts of a convent's walls, near the city of Ravenna, as I have said.'

'But tell me, Pietro, what is embalming?' asked the housekeeper who had somewhat recovered, by force of curiosity, as the interest of the story progressed.

Pietro replied by describing the process, and 'indeed,' said he, 'you might almost be deceived by it, and take the dead for the living, when a great master of the art of embalming performs the operation. I can speak for Count Campo. He looked very like life, and seemed to want only speech when we placed him beside his mother, not a month ago.'

'Beside his mother!' exclaimed the alarmed housekeeper who was not prepared for this sequel.

'Yes,' replied Pietro calmly, 'beside the Countess his mother. We found the tomb, a marble temple as I might say, sealed up, and on removing the huge slab upon it, behold! there sat the venerable mother of your master, the Professor, fresh as in the life, as if gazing forth upon the intruders. She was clad in garments of great splendour, and the costly jewels, heirlooms of the family, upon her neck and arms were barely dimmed by the long years of neglect which had passed by, so well had the spot been chosen in the dry chalk, and so firmly and closely had the union of the various blocks of marble been secured.'

'Snuff the candles,' said the housekeeper, which being done, Pietro, growing excited himself and in spite of himself, renewed his narrative, telling us how a hundred monks, some with torches and some in masks,

came forth from the convent chapel chanting a dirge for the dead, and bearing lighted wax candles, and 'how they proceeded to place the body of the Count beside the once fond mother, in strict accordance with the wish of the last deceased, expressed on his dying bed, in the far-off city of Brussels.

'It was all fulfilled to the letter,' added Pietro, 'and in the presence of Lord Petrel, of our good Professor, now Count Campo, and above all in the presence of the Proctor, who had caused us so much trouble by his mistake, and by an overweening sense of duty, for proctors should set some bounds to curiosity.'

'Indeed, they should,' interjected the housekeeper. 'But proceed, Pietro, and tell us more of the strange story.'

'My story is finished,' said Pietro, 'but my admiration of Lady Petrel will last while Pietro di Pisa has life.' This was said in a manner so solemn as to attract the attention of Janet, who was one of the auditors of the story. 'You must know,' added Pietro, 'that the Count died in debt, and it was a duty of no mean responsibility which his daughter had undertaken to perform. Ascertaining that the Franciscan monks who owned the family vault were not willing to permit it to be opened, save at great cost—five hundred lira (a lira is nearly a guinea)—the devoted daughter resolved by means of her harp to accomplish the object she had in view; and accompanied by the Countess her mother (who had indeed less feeling in the matter) made the tour of every city of note on the continent, penetrating even so far as St. Petersburg. Long, with unwearying zeal, did the brave girl pursue her noble vocation,

winning honour and wealth, stinting herself all the time in order to accumulate the large sum demanded by those selfish Franciscans. At length she succeeded. She became rich beyond all expectation, and was preparing to set out for Italy, when, as God willed it, she heard, for the first time, that she had an uncle in England, that is, our good Professor here in St. James's College in the city of Oxford, and here she brought the precious burden of death which she had borne with her wherever she had travelled. It was with her when the Empress of Russia presented her with the monster ruby which burns like a lamp upon her breast; she slept as it were by its side only a few months ago in this very house.'

'God bless us!' exclaimed the housekeeper, 'and now I come to remember there was a strange box among her ladyship's luggage. Surely, Peter, was that—could it be the coffin?'

'It was,' said Pietro.

'And was the corpse of Count Campo in it?' asked the housekeeper growing pale.

'Beyond doubt,' rejoined Pietro.

'Then the Proctor really saw Count Campo in the young lady's chamber at the Manor House?'

'It was so.'

'Does Lord Petrel know all about what you have told us?' instinctively inquired the housekeeper.

'Every circumstance, from beginning to end.'

'And did his lordship approve of such strange conduct?' continued his still perplexed questioner.

'Ah, Mrs. Atkins!' answered Pietro, 'you should have seen, at the last moment when the vault was closed, and the mournful girl was carried to the hotel over-

come with the great struggle she had made to complete the strange task of duty and affection she had undertaken—you should have seen his lordship when the colour returned to those beautiful cheeks, and the consciousness that henceforth her life was her own.

‘“Such a daughter,” said the young noble, “deserves a better husband than I can hope to be.”

‘“Carlotta does not think so,” said the good Professor, as with tears in his eyes he placed their hands in each other’s, and called down the blessing of heaven upon their loves.’

‘Pietro,’ said the old lady, as she bade him good-night, ‘you foreigners have very odd ways.’

CHAPTER XXXII.

PEACE AT THE TOWER, AND FESTIVITIES AT THE MANOR HOUSE.

IT was pleasant to witness the return of the Professor to the Tower, where he had spent so many years of his life in study and repose. It is not easy to appreciate the sentiments which sometimes bind a man, and above all such a man as Professor Campo, to a cherished home. Nothing could be said upon this theme which would not seem trite. Some would smile at the idea of making a trouble of the mere act of changing a dwelling. But to the finely organised the matter is presented in a different sense. The recluse has his solitary bliss. Rooted as it were to a particular spot, he comes to cherish it, notes a

THE RENAISSANCE OF ART IN FRANCE.

By Mrs. MARK PATTISON.

With 19 Illustrations on Steel. 2 vols. demy 8vo. cloth. Price 32s.

'Mrs. Pattison has done well to choose France for the field of her labours. One cannot too much admire the indefatigable industry and patience which have led her, through endless research, to such a result. She is completely mistress of her subject, and handles it with firmness and precision. . . . The attractiveness of the book is enhanced by excellent illustrations on steel, but their absence would not diminish its charm. It would be too much to hope for many volumes like these, but happy the literary year that is inaugurated by such a work.'

EXAMINER.

THE CIVILISATION OF THE PERIOD OF THE RENAISSANCE IN ITALY.

By JACOB BURCKHARDT.

Authorised Translation by S. G. C. MIDDLEMORE.

2 vols. demy 8vo. cloth. Price 24s.

'The whole of the first part of Dr. Burckhardt's work deals with what may be called the Political Preparation for the Renaissance. It is impossible here to do more than express a high opinion of the compact way in which the facts are put before the reader. . . . The second volume is, we think, more full and complete in itself, more rich in original thoughts, than the first.'

SATURDAY REVIEW.

THE EPIC OF HADES.

By the Author of 'Songs of Two Worlds' &c.

Illustrated Edition, with 17 Full-page Designs in Photo-Mezzotint by George R. Chapman.

4to. cloth extra, gilt leaves. Price 25s.

'Many of the designs are gems of exquisite feeling.'—WORLD.

'Fine poem, finely illustrated.'—SPECTATOR.

'Eros and Psyche literally float in ether.'—GRAPHIC.

'A luxurious and beautiful volume.'—CHURCH TIMES.

A DREAMER'S SKETCH BOOK.

By SOPHIA LYDIA WALTERS.

With 21 Illustrations by Percival Skelton, R. P. Leitch, W. H. J. Boot, and T. R. Pritchett; engraved by J. D. Cooper.

Fcp. 4to. cloth. Price 12s. 6d.

'Miss Walters is a clear and nimble versifier; she has an outlook of her own upon nature; she is under the influence of no contemporary poet; and she seems quite in earnest about what she writes. . . . We hope to meet with Miss Walters again.'—ACADEMY.

C. KEGAN PAUL & CO., 1 Paternoster Square.

LECTURES ON FRENCH POETS.

DELIVERED AT THE ROYAL INSTITUTION.

By W. H. POLLOCK.

Small crown 8vo. cloth. Price 5s.

NORTHERN STUDIES.—STUDIES IN THE LITERATURE OF NORTHERN EUROPE.

By EDMUND W. GOSSE.

With a Frontispiece designed and etched by L. Alma Tadema.

Large post 8vo. cloth. Price 12s.

‘We may say of the book in its entirety that, as a group of monograms, charmingly and often brilliantly written, upon unfamiliar yet interesting subjects, it is a decided success.’

ATHENÆUM.

SHAKSPERE:

A CRITICAL STUDY OF HIS MIND AND ART.

By EDWARD DOWDEN, LL.D.

Fourth Edition. Post 8vo. cloth. Price 12s.

‘He has an unusual insight into the broader as well as the nicer meanings of Shakspeare. . . . The book contains many valuable remarks on the drama.’—SATURDAY REVIEW.

‘Entitled to the honourable distinction due to thoroughly prepared materials and elaborate workmanship. . . . Every page bears such marks of thought and care, both in matter and in manner.’—EXAMINER.

STUDIES IN LITERATURE, 1789-1877.

By EDWARD DOWDEN, LL.D.

Large post 8vo. cloth. Price 12s.

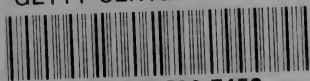
‘Written with extreme care. . . . We return thanks to Professor Dowden for certainly the most thoughtful book of literary comment which we have seen for a long time.’

ACADEMY.

‘Apart from their critical value, these essays of Professor Dowden are precious for their fine literary qualities.’—EXAMINER.

C. KEGAN PAUL & CO., 1 Paternoster Square.

GETTY CENTER LIBRARY



3 3125 00590 7452

